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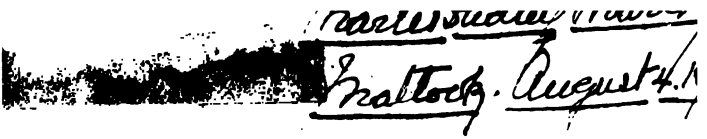

"THE WATERS ROSE EVERY INSTANT WITH SULLEN SOUND."

COUSIN PHILLIS.

AND OTHER TALES.

BY MRS. GASKELL.

LONDON:
SMITH, ELDER & CO., 15, WATERLOO PLACE.
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COUSIN PHILLIS;

AND OTHER TALES.

COUSIN PHILLIS.

PART I.

It is a great thing for a lad when he is first turned into the independence of lodgings. I do not think I ever was so satisfied and proud in my life as when, at seventeen, I sate down in a little three-cornered room above a pastry-cook's shop in the county town of Eltham. My father had left me that afternoon, after delivering himself of a few plain precepts, strongly expressed, for my guidance in the new course of life on which I was entering. I was to be a clerk under the engineer who had undertaken to make the little branch line from Eltham to Hornby. My father had got me this situation, which was in a position rather above his own in life; or perhaps *I should say*, above the station in which he was

born and bred; for he was raising himself every year in men's consideration and respect. He was a mechanic by trade, but he had some inventive genius, and a great deal of perseverance, and had devised several valuable improvements in railway machinery. He did not do this for profit, though, as was reasonable, what came in the natural course of things was acceptable; he worked out his ideas, because, as he said, "until he could put them into shape, they plagued him by night and by day." But this is enough about my dear father; it is a good thing for a country where there are many like him. He was a sturdy Independent by descent and conviction; and this it was, I believe, which made him place me in the lodgings at the pastry-cook's. The shop was kept by the two sisters of our minister at home; and this was considered as a sort of safeguard to my morals, when I was turned loose upon the temptations of the county town, with a salary of thirty pounds a year.

My father had given up two precious days, and put on his Sunday clothes, in order to bring me to Eltham, and accompany me first to the office, to introduce me to my new master (who was under some obligations to my father for a suggestion), and next to take me to call on the Independent minister of the little congregation at Eltham. And then he left me; and though sorry to part with him, I now began to taste with relish the pleasure of being my own master. I unpacked the hamper that my mother had provided me with, and smelt the pots of preserve with all the delight of a possessor who might break into their contents at any time he pleased. I handled and weighed in my fancy the home-cured ham, *which seemed* to promise me interminable feasts; and,

above all, there was the fine savour of knowing that I might eat of these dainties when I liked, at my sole will, not dependent on the pleasure of any one else, however indulgent. I stowed my eatables away in the little corner cupboard—that room was all corners, and everything was placed in a corner, the fire-place, the window, the cupboard; I myself seemed to be the only thing in the middle, and there was hardly room for me. The table was made of a folding leaf under the window, and the window looked out upon the market-place; so the studies for the prosecution of which my father had brought himself to pay extra for a sitting-room for me, ran a considerable chance of being diverted from books to men and women. I was to have my meals with the two elderly Miss Browns in the little parlour behind the three-cornered shop downstairs; my breakfasts and dinners at least, for, as my hours in an evening were likely to be uncertain, my tea or supper was to be an independent meal.

Then, after this pride and satisfaction, came a sense of desolation. I had never been from home before, and I was an only child; and though my father's spoken maxim had been, "Spare the rod, and spoil the child," yet, unconsciously, his heart had yearned after me, and his ways towards me were more tender than he knew, or would have approved of in himself could he have known. My mother, who never professed sternness, was far more severe than my father: perhaps my boyish faults annoyed her more; for I remember, now that I have written the above words, how she pleaded for me once in my riper years, when I had really offended against my father's *sense of right.*

But I have nothing to do with that now. It is about cousin Phillis that I am going to write, and as yet I am far enough from even saying who cousin Phillis was.

For some months after I was settled in Eltham, the new employment in which I was engaged—the new independence of my life—occupied all my thoughts. I was at my desk by eight o'clock, home to dinner at one, back at the office by two. The afternoon work was more uncertain than the mornings; it might be the same, or it might be that I had to accompany Mr. Holdsworth, the managing engineer, to some point on the line between Eltham and Hornby. This I always enjoyed, because of the variety, and because of the country we traversed (which was very wild and pretty), and because I was thrown into companionship with Mr. Holdsworth, who held the position of hero in my boyish mind. He was a young man of five-and-twenty or so, and was in a station above mine, both by birth and education; and he had travelled on the Continent, and wore mustachios and whiskers of a somewhat foreign fashion. I was proud of being seen with him. He was really a fine fellow in a good number of ways, and I might have fallen into much worse hands.

Every Saturday I wrote home, telling of my weekly doings—my father had insisted upon this; but there was so little variety in my life that I often found it hard work to fill a letter. On Sundays I went twice to chapel, up a dark narrow entry, to hear droning hymns, and long prayers, and a still longer sermon, preached to a small congregation, of which I was, by nearly a score of years, the youngest member. Occasionally, Mr. Peters, the minister, would ask me home to tea after the second

service. I dreaded the honour, for I usually sate on the edge of my chair all the evening, and answered solemn questions, put in a deep bass voice, until household prayer-time came, at eight o'clock, when Mrs. Peters came in, smoothing down her apron, and the maid-of-all-work followed, and first a sermon, and then a chapter was read, and a long impromptu prayer followed, till some instinct told Mr. Peters that supper-time had come, and we rose from our knees with hunger for our predominant feeling. Over supper the minister did unbend a little into one or two ponderous jokes, as if to show me that ministers were men, after all. And then at ten o'clock I went home, and enjoyed my long-repressed yawns in the three-cornered room before going to bed.

Dinah and Hannah Dawson, so their names were put on the board above the shop-door—I always called them Miss Dawson and Miss Hannah—considered these visits of mine to Mr. Peters as the greatest honour a young man could have; and evidently thought that if, after such privileges, I did not work out my salvation, I was a sort of modern Judas Iscariot. On the contrary, they shook their heads over my intercourse with Mr. Holdsworth. He had been so kind to me in many ways, that when I cut into my ham, I hovered over the thought of asking him to tea in my room, more especially as the annual fair was being held in Eltham market-place, and the sight of the booths, the merry-go-rounds, the wild-beast shows, and such country pomps, was (as I thought at seventeen) very attractive. But when I ventured to allude to my wish in even distant terms, Miss Hannah caught me up, and spoke of the sinfulness of such sights, and *something about* wallowing in the mire, and then

vaulted into France, and spoke evil of the nation, and all who had ever set foot therein, till, seeing that her anger was concentrating itself into a point, and that that point was Mr. Holdsworth, I thought it would be better to finish my breakfast, and make what haste I could out of the sound of her voice. I rather wondered afterwards to hear her and Miss Dawson counting up their weekly profits with glee, and saying that a pastry-cook's shop in the corner of the market-place, in Eltham fair week, was no such bad thing. However, I never ventured to ask Mr. Holdsworth to my lodgings.

There is not much to tell about this first year of mine at Eltham. But when I was nearly nineteen, and beginning to think of whiskers on my own account, I came to know cousin Phillis, whose very existence had been unknown to me till then. Mr. Holdsworth and I had been out to Heathbridge for a day, working hard. Heathbridge was near Hornby, for our line of railway was above half finished. Of course, a day's outing was a great thing to tell about in my weekly letters; and I fell to describing the country—a fault I was not often guilty of. I told my father of the bogs, all over wild myrtle and soft moss, and shaking ground over which we had to carry our line; and how Mr. Holdsworth and I had gone for our mid-day meals—for we had to stay here for two days and a night—to a pretty village hard by, Heathbridge proper; and how I hoped we should often have to go there, for the shaking, uncertain ground was puzzling our engineers—one end of the line going up as soon as the other was weighted down. (I had no *thought for* the shareholders' interests, as may be seen; *we had to make* a new line on firmer ground before the

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I was so in the habit of yielding to his authority, or influence, that I never thought of resisting, but went on my errand, though I remember feeling as if I would rather have had my head cut off. The landlord, who had evidently taken an interest in the event of our discussion in a way that country landlords have, accompanied me to the house-door, and gave me repeated directions, as if I was likely to miss my way in two hundred yards. But I listened to him, for I was glad of the delay, to screw up my courage for the effort of facing unknown people and introducing myself. I went along the lane, I recollect, switching at all the taller roadside weeds, till, after a turn or two, I found myself close in front of the Hope Farm. There was a garden between the house and the shady, grassy lane; I afterwards found that this garden was called the court; perhaps because there was a low wall round it, with an iron railing on the top of the wall, and two great gates between pillars crowned with stone balls for a state entrance to the flagged path leading up to the front door. It was not the habit of the place to go in either by these great gates or by the front door; the gates, indeed, were locked, as I found, though the door stood wide open. I had to go round by a side-path lightly worn on a broad grassy way, which led past the court-wall, past a horse-mount, half covered with stone-crop and the little wild yellow fumitory, to another door—"the curate," as I found it was termed by the master of the house, while the front door, "handsome and all for show," was termed the "rector." I knocked with my hand upon the "curate" door; a tall girl, about my own age, as I thought, came and

opened it, and stood there silent, waiting to know my errand. I see her now—cousin Phillis. The westering sun shone full upon her, and made a slanting stream of light into the room within. She was dressed in dark blue cotton of some kind; up to her throat, down to her wrists, with a little frill of the same wherever it touched her white skin. And such a white skin as it was! I have never seen the like. She had light hair, nearer yellow than any other colour. She looked me steadily in the face with large, quiet eyes, wondering, but untroubled by the sight of a stranger. I thought it odd that so old, so full-grown as she was, she should wear a pinafore over her gown.

Before I had quite made up my mind what to say in reply to her mute inquiry of what I wanted there, a woman's voice called out, "Who is it, Phillis? If it is any one for butter-milk send them round to the back-door."

I thought I could rather speak to the owner of that voice than to the girl before me; so I passed her, and stood at the entrance of a room, hat in hand, for this side-door opened straight into the hall or house-place where the family sate when work was done. There was a brisk little woman of forty or so ironing some huge muslin cravats under the light of a long vine-shaded casement window. She looked at me distrustfully till I began to speak. "My name is Paul Manning," said I; but I saw she did not know the name. "My mother's name was Moneypenny," said I,—"Margaret Moneypenny."

"And she married one John Manning, of Birmingham," said Mrs. Holman, eagerly. "And you'll be

her son. Sit down! I am right glad to see you. To think of your being Margaret's son! Why, she was almost a child not so long ago. Well, to be sure, it is five-and-twenty years ago. And what brings you into these parts?"

She sate down herself, as if oppressed by her curiosity as to all the five-and-twenty years that had passed by since she had seen my mother. Her daughter Phillis took up her knitting—a long grey worsted man's stocking, I remember—and knitted away without looking at her work. I felt that the steady gaze of those deep grey eyes was upon me, though once, when I stealthily raised mine to hers, she was examining something on the wall above my head.

When I had answered all my cousin Holman's questions, she heaved a long breath, and said, "To think of Margaret Moneypenny's boy being in our house! I wish the minister was here. Phillis, in what field is thy father to-day?"

"In the five-acre; they are beginning to cut the corn."

"He'll not like being sent for, then, else I should have liked you to have seen the minister. But the five-acre is a good step off. You shall have a glass of wine and a bit of cake before you stir from this house, though. You're bound to go, you say, or else the minister comes in mostly when the men have their four o'clock."

"I must go—I ought to have been off before now."

"Here, then, Phillis, take the keys." She gave her daughter some whispered directions, and Phillis left the room.

"She is my cousin, is she not?" I asked. I knew

she was, but somehow I wanted to talk of her, and did not know how to begin.

"Yes—Phillis Holman. She is our only child—now."

Either from that "now," or from a strange momentary wistfulness in her eyes, I knew that there had been more children, who were now dead.

"How old is cousin Phillis?" said I, scarcely venturing on the new name, it seemed too prettily familiar for me to call her by it; but cousin Holman took no notice of it, answering straight to the purpose.

"Seventeen last May-day; but the minister does not like to hear me calling it May-day," said she, checking herself with a little awe. "Phillis was seventeen on the first day of May last," she repeated in an emended edition.

"And I am nineteen in another month," thought I, to myself; I don't know why.

Then Phillis came in, carrying a tray with wine and cake upon it.

"We keep a house-servant," said cousin Holman, "but it is churning day, and she is busy." It was meant as a little proud apology for her daughter's being the handmaiden.

"I like doing it, mother," said Phillis, in her grave, full voice.

I felt as if I were somebody in the Old Testament—. who, I could not recollect—being served and waited upon by the daughter of the host. Was I like Abraham's steward, when Rebekah gave him to drink at the well? I thought Isaac had not gone the pleasantest way to work in winning him a wife. But Phillis never thought

about such things. She was a stately, gracious young woman, in the dress and with the simplicity of a child.

As I had been taught, I drank to the health of my new-found cousin and her husband; and then I ventured to name my cousin Phillis with a little bow of my head towards her; but I was too awkward to look and see how she took my compliment. "I must go now," said I, rising.

Neither of the women had thought of sharing in the wine; cousin Holman had broken a bit of cake for form's sake.

"I wish the minister had been within," said his wife, rising too. Secretly I was very glad he was not. I did not take kindly to ministers in those days, and I thought he must be a particular kind of man, by his objecting to the term May-day. But before I went, cousin Holman made me promise that I would come back on the Saturday following and spend Sunday with them; when I should see something of "the minister."

"Come on Friday, if you can," were her last words as she stood at the curate-door, shading her eyes from the sinking sun with her hand.

Inside the house sate cousin Phillis, her golden hair, her dazzling complexion, lighting up the corner of the vine-shadowed room. She had not risen when I bade her good-by; she had looked at me straight as she said her tranquil words of farewell.

I found Mr. Holdsworth down at the line, hard at work superintending. As soon as he had a pause, he said, "Well, Manning, what are the new cousins like? How do preaching and farming seem to get on together?

If the minister turns out to be practical as well as reverend, I shall begin to respect him."

But he hardly attended to my answer, he was so much more occupied with directing his work-people. Indeed, my answer did not come very readily; and the most distinct part of it was the mention of the invitation that had been given me.

"Oh, of course you can go—and on Friday, too, if you like; there is no reason why not this week; and you've done a long spell of work this time, old fellow."

I thought that I did not want to go on Friday; but when the day came, I found that I should prefer going to staying away, so I availed myself of Mr. Holdsworth's permission, and went over to Hope Farm some time in the afternoon, a little later than my last visit. I found the "curate" open to admit the soft September air, so tempered by the warmth of the sun, that it was warmer out of doors than in, although the wooden log lay smouldering in front of a heap of hot ashes on the hearth. The vine-leaves over the window had a tinge more yellow, their hedges were here and there scorched and browned; there was no ironing about, and cousin Holman sate just outside the house, mending a shirt. Phillis was at her knitting indoors: it seemed as if she had been at it all the week. The many-speckled fowls were pecking about in the farmyard beyond, and the milk-cans glittered with brightness, hung out to sweeten. The court was so full of flowers that they crept out upon the low-covered wall and horse-mount, and were even to be found self-sown upon the turf that bordered the path to the back of the house. I fancied that my Sunday

coat was scented for days afterwards by the bushes of sweetbriar and the fraxinella that perfumed the air. From time to time cousin Holman put her hand into a covered basket at her feet, and threw handsful of corn down for the pigeons that cooed and fluttered in the air around, in expectation of this treat.

I had a thorough welcome as soon as she saw me. "Now this is kind—this is right down friendly," shaking my hand warmly. "Phillis, your cousin Manning is come!"

"Call me Paul, will you?" said I; "they call me so at home, and Manning in the office."

"Well, Paul, then. Your room is all ready for you, Paul, for, as I said to the minister, 'I'll have it ready whether he comes o' Friday or not.' And the minister said he must go up to the Ashfield whether you were to come or not; but he would come home betimes to see if you were here. I'll show you to your room, and you can wash the dust off a bit."

After I came down, I think she did not quite know what to do with me; or she might think that I was dull; or she might have work to do in which I hindered her; for she called Phillis, and bade her put on her bonnet, and go with me to the Ashfield, and find father. So we set off, I in a little flutter of a desire to make myself agreeable, but wishing that my companion were not quite so tall; for she was above me in height. While I was wondering how to begin our conversation, she took up the words.

"I suppose, cousin Paul, you have to be very busy at your work all day long in general."

"Yes, we have to be in the office at half-past eight;

and we have an hour for dinner, and then we go at it again till eight or nine."

"Then you have not much time for reading."

"No," said I, with a sudden consciousness that I did not make the most of what leisure I had.

"No more have I. Father always gets an hour before going a-field in the mornings, but mother does not like me to get up so early."

"My mother is always wanting me to get up earlier when I am at home."

"What time do you get up?"

"Oh!—ah!—sometimes half-past six; not often though;" for I remembered only twice that I had done so during the past summer.

She turned her head and looked at me.

"Father is up at three; and so was mother till she was ill. I should like to be up at four."

"Your father up at three! Why, what has he to do at that hour?"

"What has he not to do? He has his private exercise in his own room; he always rings the great bell which calls the men to milking; he rouses up Betty, our maid; as often as not he gives the horses their feed before the man is up—for Jem, who takes care of the horses, is an old man; and father is always loth to disturb him; he looks at the calves, and the shoulders, heels, traces, chaff, and corn before the horses go a-field; he has often to whip-cord the plough-whips; he sees the hogs fed; he looks into the swill-tubs, and writes his orders for what is wanted for food for man and beast; yes, and for fuel, too. And then, if he has *a bit of* time to spare, he comes in and reads

with me—but only English; we keep Latin for the evenings, that we may have time to enjoy it; and then he calls in the man to breakfast, and cuts the boys' bread and cheese; and sees their wooden bottles filled, and sends them off to their work;—and by this time it is half-past six, and we have our breakfast. There is father," she exclaimed, pointing out to me a man in his shirt-sleeves, taller by the head than the other two with whom he was working. We only saw him through the leaves of the ash-trees growing in the hedge, and I thought I must be confusing the figures, or mistaken: that man still looked like a very powerful labourer, and had none of the precise demureness of appearance which I had always imagined was the characteristic of a minister. It was the Reverend Ebenezer Holman, however. He gave us a nod as we entered the stubble-field; and I think he would have come to meet us but that he was in the middle of giving some directions to his men. I could see that Phillis was built more after his type than her mother's. He, like his daughter, was largely made, and of a fair, ruddy complexion, whereas hers was brilliant and delicate. His hair had been yellow or sandy, but now was grizzled. Yet his grey hairs betokened no failure in strength. I never saw a more powerful man—deep chest, lean flanks, well-planted head. By this time we were nearly up to him; and he interrupted himself and stepped forwards; holding out his hand to me, but addressing Phillis.

"Well, my lass, this is cousin Manning, I suppose. Wait a minute, young man, and I'll put on my coat, and give you a decorous and formal welcome. But——Ned Hall, there ought to be a water-furrow across this land:

it's a nasty, stiff, clayey, dauby bit of ground, and thou and I must fall to, come next Monday—I beg your pardon, cousin Manning—and there's old Jem's cottage wants a bit of thatch; you can do that job to-morrow while I am busy." Then, suddenly changing the tone of his deep bass voice to an odd suggestion of chapels and preachers, he added, "Now, I will give out the psalm, 'Come all harmonious tongues,' to be sung to 'Mount Ephraim' tune."

He lifted his spade in his hand, and began to beat time with it; the two labourers seemed to know both words and music, though I did not; and so did Phillis: her rich voice followed her father's as he set the tune; and the men came in with more uncertainty, but still harmoniously. Phillis looked at me once or twice with a little surprise at my silence; but I did not know the words. There we five stood, bareheaded, excepting Phillis, in the tawny stubble-field, from which all the shocks of corn had not yet been carried—a dark wood on one side, where the woodpigeons were cooing; blue distance seen through the ash-trees on the other. Somehow, I think that if I had known the words, and could have sung, my throat would have been choked up by the feeling of the unaccustomed scene.

The hymn was ended, and the men had drawn off before I could stir. I saw the minister beginning to put on his coat, and looking at me with friendly inspection in his gaze, before I could rouse myself.

"I dare say you railway gentlemen don't wind up the day with singing a psalm together," said he; "but it is not a bad practice—not a bad practice. We have had it a bit earlier to-day for hospitality's sake—that's all."

I had nothing particular to say to this, though I was thinking a great deal. From time to time I stole a look at my companion. His coat was black, and so was his waistcoat; neckcloth he had none, his strong full throat being bare above the snow-white shirt. He wore drab-coloured knee-breeches, grey worsted stockings (I thought I knew the maker), and strong-nailed shoes. He carried his hat in his hand, as if he liked to feel the coming breeze lifting his hair. After a while, I saw that the father took hold of the daughter's hand, and so, they holding each other, went along towards home. We had to cross a lane. In it there were two little children, one lying prone on the grass in a passion of crying, the other standing stock still, with its finger in its mouth, the large tears slowly rolling down its cheeks for sympathy. The cause of their distress was evident; there was a broken brown pitcher, and a little pool of spilt milk on the road.

"Hollo! Hollo! What's all this?" said the minister. "Why, what have you been about, Tommy," lifting the little petticoated lad, who was lying sobbing, with one vigorous arm. Tommy looked at him with surprise in his round eyes, but no affright—they were evidently old acquaintances.

"Mammy's jug!" said he, at last, beginning to cry afresh.

"Well! and will crying piece mammy's jug, or pick up spilt milk? How did you manage it, Tommy?"

"He" (jerking his head at the other) "and me was running races."

"Tommy said he could beat me," put in the other.

"Now, I wonder what will

mind, and not run races again with a pitcher of milk between you," said the minister, as if musing. "I might flog you, and so save mammy the trouble; for I dare say she'll do it if I don't." The fresh burst of whimpering from both showed the probability of this. "Or I might take you to the Hope Farm, and give you some more milk; but then you'd be running races again, and my milk would follow that to the ground, and make another white pool. I think the flogging would be best —don't you?"

"We would never run races no more," said the elder of the two.

"Then you'd not be boys; you'd be angels."

"No, we shouldn't."

"Why not?"

They looked into each other's eyes for an answer to this puzzling question. At length, one said, "Angels is dead folk."

"Come; we'll not get too deep into theology. What do you think of my lending you a tin can with a lid to carry the milk home in? That would not break, at any rate; though I would not answer for the milk not spilling if you ran races. That's it!"

He had dropped his daughter's hand, and now held out each of his to the little fellows. Phillis and I followed, and listened to the prattle which the minister's companions now poured out to him, and which he was evidently enjoying. At a certain point, there was a sudden burst of the tawny, ruddy-evening landscape. The minister turned round and quoted a line or two of Latin.

"It's *wonderful*," said he, "how exactly Virgil has

hit the enduring epithets, nearly two thousand years ago, and in Italy; and yet how it describes to a T what is now lying before us in the parish of Heathbridge, county ——, England."

"I dare say it does," said I, all aglow with shame, for I had forgotten the little Latin I ever knew.

The minister shifted his eyes to Phillis's face; it mutely gave him back the sympathetic appreciation that I, in my ignorance, could not bestow.

"Oh! this is worse than the catechism," thought I; "that was only remembering words."

"Phillis, lass, thou must go home with these lads, and tell their mother all about the race and the milk. Mammy must always know the truth," now speaking to the children. "And tell her, too, from me that I have got the best birch rod in the parish; and that if she ever thinks her children want a flogging she must bring them to me, and, if I think they deserve it, I'll give it them better than she can." So Phillis led the children towards the dairy, somewhere in the back yard, and I followed the minister in through the "curate" into the house-place.

"Their mother," said he, "is a bit of a vixen, and apt to punish her children without rhyme or reason. I try to keep the parish rod as well as the parish bull."

He sate down in the three-cornered chair by the fire-side, and looked around the empty room.

"Where's the missus?" said he to himself. But she was there in a minute; it was her regular plan to give him his welcome home—by a look, by a touch, nothing more—as soon as she could after his return, and he had missed her now. Regardless of my presence, he went

over the day's doings to her; and then, getting up, he said he must go and make himself "reverend," and that then we would have a cup of tea in the parlour. The parlour was a large room with two casemented windows on the other side of the broad flagged passage leading from the rector-door to the wide staircase, with its shallow, polished oaken steps, on which no carpet was ever laid. The parlour-floor was covered in the middle by a home-made carpeting of needlework and list. One or two quaint family pictures of the Holman family hung round the walls; the fire-grate and irons were much ornamented with brass; and on a table against the wall between the windows, a great beau-pot of flowers was placed upon the folio volumes of Matthew Henry's Bible. It was a compliment to me to use this room, and I tried to be grateful for it; but we never had our meals there after that first day, and I was glad of it; for the large house-place, living-room, dining-room, whichever you might like to call it, was twice as comfortable and cheerful. There was a rug in front of the great large fire-place, and an oven by the grate, and a crook, with the kettle hanging from it, over the bright wood-fire; everything that ought to be black and polished in that room was black and polished; and the flags, and window-curtains, and such things as were to be white and clean, were just spotless in their purity. Opposite to the fire-place, extending the whole length of the room, was an oaken shovel-board, with the right incline for a skilful player to send the weights into the prescribed space. There were baskets of white work about, and a small shelf of books hung against the wall, books used for reading, and not for propping up a beau-pot of

flowers. I took down one or two of those books once when I was left alone in the house-place on the first evening—Virgil, Cæsar, a Greek grammar—oh, dear! ah, me! and Phillis Holman's name in each of them! I shut them up, and put them back in their places, and walked as far away from the bookshelf as I could. Yes, and I gave my cousin Phillis a wide berth, although she was sitting at her work quietly enough, and her hair was looking more golden, her dark eyelashes longer, her round pillar of a throat whiter than ever. We had done tea, and we had returned into the house-place that the minister might smoke his pipe without fear of contaminating the drab damask window-curtains of the parlour. He had made himself "reverend" by putting on one of the voluminous white muslin neckcloths that I had seen cousin Holman ironing that first visit I had paid to the Hope Farm, and by making one or two other unimportant changes in his dress. He sate looking steadily at me, but whether he saw me or not I cannot tell. At the time I fancied that he did, and was gauging me in some unknown fashion in his secret mind. Every now and then he took his pipe out of his mouth, knocked out the ashes, and asked me some fresh question. As long as these related to my acquirements or my reading, I shuffled uneasily and did not know what to answer. By-and-by he got round to the more practical subject of railroads, and on this I was more at home. I really had taken an interest in my work; nor would Mr. Holdsworth, indeed, have kept me in his employment if I had not given my mind as well as my time to it; and I was, besides, full of the difficulties which beset us just then, owing to our not being able to find a steady

bottom on the Heathbridge moss, over which we wished to carry our line. In the midst of all my eagerness in speaking about this, I could not help being struck with the extreme pertinence of his questions. I do not mean that he did not show ignorance of many of the details of engineering: that was to have been expected; but on the premises he had got hold of, he thought clearly and reasoned logically. Phillis—so like him as she was both in body and mind—kept stopping at her work and looking at me, trying to fully understand all that I said. I felt she did; and perhaps it made me take more pains in using clear expressions, and arranging my words, than I otherwise should.

"She shall see I know something worth knowing, though it mayn't be her dead-and-gone languages," thought I.

"I see," said the minister, at length. "I understand it all. You've a clear, good head of your own, my lad,—choose how you came by it."

"From my father," said I, proudly. "Have you not heard of his discovery of a new method of shunting? It was in the *Gazette*. It was patented. I thought every one had heard of Manning's patent winch."

"We don't know who invented the alphabet," said he, half smiling, and taking up his pipe.

"No, I dare say not, sir," replied I, half offended; "that's so long ago."

Puff—puff—puff.

"But your father must be a notable man. I heard of him once before; and it is not many a one fifty miles away whose fame reaches Heathbridge."

"My father is a notable man, sir. It is not me that

says so; it is Mr. Holdsworth, and—and everybody."

"He is right to stand up for his father," said cousin Holman, as if she were pleading for me.

I chafed inwardly, thinking that my father needed no one to stand up for him. He was man sufficient for himself.

"Yes—he is right," said the minister, placidly. "Right, because it comes from his heart—right, too, as I believe, in point of fact. Else there is many a young cockèrel that will stand upon a dunghill and crow about his father, by way of making his own plumage to shine. I should like to know thy father," he went on, turning straight to me, with a kindly, frank look in his eyes.

But I was vexed, and would take no notice. Presently, having finished his pipe, he got up and left the room. Phillis put her work hastily down, and went after him. In a minute or two she returned, and sate down again. Not long after, and before I had quite recovered my good temper, he opened the door out of which he had passed, and called to me to come to him. I went across a narrow stone passage into a strange, many-cornered room, not ten feet in area, part study, part counting-house, looking into the farm-yard; with a desk to sit at, a desk to stand at, a spittoon, a set of shelves with old divinity books upon them; another, smaller, filled with books on farriery, farming, manures, and such subjects, with pieces of paper containing memoranda stuck against the whitewashed walls with wafers, nails, pins, anything that came readiest to hand; a box of carpenter's tools on the floor, and some manuscripts in short-hand on *the desk.*

He turned round half laughing. "That foolish girl of mine thinks I have vexed you"—putting his large, powerful hand on my shoulder. "'Nay,' says I; 'kindly meant is kindly taken'—is it not so?"

"It was not quite, sir," replied I, vanquished by his manner; "but it shall be in future."

"Come, that's right. You and I shall be friends. Indeed, it's not many a one I would bring in here. But I was reading a book this morning, and I could not make it out; it is a book that was left here by mistake one day; I had subscribed to Brother Robinson's sermons; and I was glad to see this instead of them, for sermons though they be, they're . . . well, never mind! I took 'em both, and made my old coat do a bit longer; but all's fish that comes to my net. I have fewer books than leisure to read them, and I have a prodigious big appetite. Here it is."

It was a volume of stiff mechanics, involving many technical terms, and some rather deep mathematics. These last, which would have puzzled me, seemed easy enough to him; all that he wanted was the explanations of the technical words, which I could easily give.

While he was looking through the book to find the places where he had been puzzled, my wandering eye caught on some of the papers on the wall, and I could not help reading one, which has stuck by me ever since. At first, it seemed a kind of weekly diary; but then I saw that the seven days were portioned out for special prayers and intercessions: Monday for his family, Tuesday for enemies, Wednesday for the Independent churches, Thursday for all other churches, Friday for persons afflicted, Saturday for his own soul, Sunday for all wan-

derers and sinners, that they might be brought home to the fold.

We were called back into the house-place to have supper. A door opening into the kitchen was opened; and all stood up in both rooms, while the minister, tall, large, one hand resting on the spread table, the other lifted up, said, in the deep voice that would have been loud had it not been so full and rich, but with the peculiar accent or twang that I believe is considered devout by some people, "Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, let us do all to the glory of God."

The supper was an immense meat-pie. We of the house-place were helped first; then the minister hit the handle of his buck-horn carving-knife on the table once, and said,—

"Now or never," which meant, did any of us want any more; and when we had all declined, either by silence or by words, he knocked twice with his knife on the table, and Betty came in through the open door, and carried off the great dish to the kitchen, where an old man and a young one, and a help-girl, were awaiting their meal.

"Shut the door, if you will," said the minister to Betty.

"That's in honour of you," said cousin Holman, in a tone of satisfaction, as the door was shut. "When we've no stranger with us, the minister is so fond of keeping the door open, and talking to the men and maids, just as much as to Phillis and me."

"It brings us all together like a household just before we meet as a household in prayer," said he, in explanation. "But to go back to what we were talking about—can you tell me of any simple book on dynamics that I

could put in my pocket, and study a little at leisure times in the day?"

"Leisure times, father?" said Phillis, with a nearer approach to a smile than I had yet seen on her face.

"Yes; leisure times, daughter. There is many an odd minute lost in waiting for other folk; and now that railroads are coming so near us, it behoves us to know something about them."

I thought of his own description of his "prodigious big appetite" for learning. And he had a good appetite of his own for the more material victual before him. But I saw, or fancied I saw, that he had some rule for himself in the matter both of food and drink.

As soon as supper was done the household assembled for prayer. It was a long impromptu evening prayer; and it would have seemed desultory enough had I not had a glimpse of the kind of day that preceded it, and so been able to find a clue to the thoughts that preceded the disjointed utterances; for he kept there kneeling down in the centre of a circle, his eyes shut, his outstretched hands pressed palm to palm—sometimes with a long pause of silence, as if waiting to see if there was anything else he wished to "lay before the Lord" (to use his own expression)—before he concluded with the blessing. He prayed for the cattle and live creatures, rather to my surprise; for my attention had begun to wander, till it was recalled by the familiar words.

And here I must not forget to name an odd incident at the conclusion of the prayer, and before we had risen from our knees (indeed before Betty was well awake, for she made a nightly practice of having a sound nap, her weary *head lying on* her stalwart arms); the minister,

still kneeling in our midst, but with his eyes wide open, and his arms dropped by his side, spoke to the elder man, who turned round on his knees to attend. "John, didst see that Daisy had her warm mash to-night; for we must not neglect the means, John—two quarts of gruel, a spoonful of ginger, and a gill of beer—the poor beast needs it, and I fear it slipped out of my mind to tell thee; and here was I asking a blessing and neglecting the means, which is a mockery," said he, dropping his voice.

Before we went to bed he told me he should see little or nothing more of me during my visit, which was to end on Sunday evening, as he always gave up both Saturday and Sabbath to his work in the ministry. I remembered that the landlord at the inn had told me this on the day when I first inquired about these new relations of mine; and I did not dislike the opportunity which I saw would be afforded me of becoming more acquainted with cousin Holman and Phillis, though I earnestly hoped that the latter would not attack me on the subject of the dead languages.

I went to bed, and dreamed that I was as tall as cousin Phillis, and had a sudden and miraculous growth of whisker, and a still more miraculous acquaintance with Latin and Greek. Alas! I wakened up still a short, beardless lad, with "*tempus fugit*" for my sole remembrance of the little Latin I had once learnt. While I was dressing, a bright thought came over me: I could question cousin Phillis, instead of her questioning me, and so manage to keep the choice of the subjects of conversation in my own power.

Early as it was, every one had breakfasted, and my

basin of bread and milk was put on the oven-top to await my coming down. Every one was gone about their work. The first to come into the house-place was Phillis with a basket of eggs. Faithful to my resolution, I asked—

"What are those?"

She looked at me for a moment, and then said gravely—

"Potatoes!"

"No! they are not," said I. "They are eggs. What do you mean by saying they are potatoes?"

"What do you mean by asking me what they were, when they were plain to be seen?" retorted she.

We were both getting a little angry with each other.

"I don't know. I wanted to begin to talk to you; and I was afraid you would talk to me about books as you did yesterday. I have not read much; and you and the minister have read so much."

"I have not," said she. "But you are our guest; and mother says I must make it pleasant to you. We won't talk of books. What must we talk about?"

"I don't know. How old are you?"

"Seventeen last May. How old are you?"

"I am nineteen. Older than you by nearly two years," said I, drawing myself up to my full height.

"I should not have thought you were above sixteen," she replied, as quietly as if she were not saying the most provoking thing she possibly could. Then came a pause.

"What are you going to do now?" asked I.

"I should be dusting the bed-chambers; but mother said I *had better* stay and make it pleasant to you."

said she, a little plaintively, as if dusting rooms was far the easiest task.

"Will you take me to see the live-stock? I like animals, though I don't know much about them."

"Oh, do you? I am so glad! I was afraid you would not like animals, as you did not like books."

I wondered why she said this. I think it was because she had begun to fancy all our tastes must be dissimilar. We went together all through the farm-yard; we fed the poultry, she kneeling down with her pinafore full of corn and meal, and tempting the little timid, downy chickens upon it, much to the anxiety of the fussy ruffled hen, their mother. She called to the pigeons, who fluttered down at the sound of her voice. She and I examined the great sleek cart-horses; sympathized in our dislike of pigs; fed the calves; coaxed the sick cow, Daisy; and admired the others out at pasture; and came back tired and hungry and dirty at dinner-time, having quite forgotten that there were such things as dead languages, and consequently capital friends.

PART II.

Cousin Holman gave me the weekly county newspaper to read aloud to her, while she mended stockings out of a high piled-up basket, Phillis helping her mother. I read and read, unregardful of the words I was uttering, *thinking of* all manner of other things; of the bright

colour of Phillis's hair, as the afternoon sun fell on her bending head; of the silence of the house, which enabled me to hear the double tick of the old clock which stood half-way up the stairs; of the variety of inarticulate noises which cousin Holman made while I read, to show her sympathy, wonder, or horror at the newspaper intelligence. The tranquil monotony of that hour made me feel as if I had lived for ever, and should live for ever droning out paragraphs in that warm sunny room, with my two quiet hearers, and the curled-up pussy cat sleeping on the hearth-rug, and the clock on the house-stairs perpetually clicking out the passage of the moments. By-and-by Betty the servant came to the door into the kitchen, and made a sign to Phillis, who put her half-mended stocking down, and went away to the kitchen without a word. Looking at cousin Holman a minute or two afterwards, I saw that she had dropped her chin upon her breast, and had fallen fast asleep. I put the newspaper down, and was nearly following her example, when a waft of air from some unseen source, slightly opened the door of communication with the kitchen, that Phillis must have left unfastened; and I saw part of her figure as she sate by the dresser, peeling apples with quick dexterity of finger, but with repeated turnings of her head towards some book lying on the dresser by her. I softly rose, and as softly went into the kitchen, and looked over her shoulder; before she was aware of my neighbourhood, I had seen that the book was in a language unknown to me, and the running title was *L'Inferno*. Just as I was making out the relationship of this word to "infernal," she started and turned

round, and, as if continuing her thought as she spoke, she sighed out,—

"Oh! it is so difficult! Can you help me?" putting her finger below a line.

"Me! I! Not I! I don't even know what language it is in!"

"Don't you see it is Dante?" she replied, almost petulantly; she did so want help.

"Italian, then?" said I, dubiously; for I was not quite sure.

"Yes. And I do so want to make it out. Father can help me a little, for he knows Latin; but then he has so little time."

"You have not much, I should think, if you have often to try and do two things at once, as you are doing now."

"Oh! that's nothing! Father bought a heap of old books cheap. And I knew something about Dante before; and I have always liked Virgil so much. Paring apples is nothing, if I could only make out this old Italian. I wish you knew it."

"I wish I did," said I, moved by her impetuosity of tone. "If, now, only Mr. Holdsworth were here; he can speak Italian like anything, I believe."

"Who is Mr. Holdsworth?" said Phillis, looking up.

"Oh, he's our head engineer. He's a regular first-rate fellow! He can do anything;" my hero-worship and my pride in my chief all coming into play. Besides, if I was not clever and book-learned myself, it was something to belong to some one who was.

"How is it that he speaks Italian?" asked Phillis.

"He had to make a railway through Piedmont, which

is in Italy, I believe; and he had to talk to all the workmen in Italian; and I have heard him say that for nearly two years he had only Italian books to read in the queer outlandish places he was in."

"Oh, dear!" said Phillis; "I wish——" and then she stopped. I was not quite sure whether to say the next thing that came into my mind; but I said it.

"Could I ask him anything about your book, or your difficulties?"

She was silent for a minute or so, and then she made reply—

"No! I think not. Thank you very much, though. I can generally puzzle a thing out in time. And then, perhaps, I remember it better than if some one had helped me. I'll put it away now, and you must move off, for I've got to make the paste for the pies; we always have a cold dinner on Sabbaths."

"But I may stay and help you, mayn't I?"

"Oh, yes; not that you can help at all, but I like to have you with me."

I was both flattered and annoyed at this straightforward avowal. I was pleased that she liked me; but I was young coxcomb enough to have wished to play the lover, and I was quite wise enough to perceive that if she had any idea of the kind in her head she would never have spoken out so frankly. I comforted myself immediately, however, by finding out that the grapes were sour. A great tall girl in a pinafore, half a head taller than I was, reading books that I had never heard of, and talking about them too, as of far more interest than any mere personal subjects; that was the last day on which I ever thought of my dear cousin Phillis as

the possible mistress of my heart and life. But we were all the greater friends for this idea being utterly put away and buried out of sight.

Late in the evening the minister came home from Hornby. He had been calling on the different members of his flock; and unsatisfactory work it had proved to him, it seemed from the fragments that dropped out of his thoughts into his talk.

"I don't see the men; they are all at their business, their shops, or their warehouses; they ought to be there. I have no fault to find with them; only if a pastor's teaching or words of admonition are good for anything, they are needed by the men as much as by the women."

"Cannot you go and see them in their places of business, and remind them of their Christian privileges and duties, minister?" asked cousin Holman, who evidently thought that her husband's words could never be out of place.

"No!" said he, shaking his head. "I judge them by myself. If there are clouds in the sky, and I am getting in the hay just ready for loading, and rain sure to come in the night, I should look ill upon brother Robinson if he came into the field to speak about serious things."

"But, at any rate, father, you do good to the women, and perhaps they repeat what you have said to them to their husbands and children?"

"It is to be hoped they do, for I cannot reach the men directly; but the women are apt to tarry before coming to me, to put on ribbons and gauds; as if they could hear the message I bear to them best in their

smart clothes. Mrs. Dobson to-day——Phillis, I am thankful thou dost not care for the vanities of dress!"

Phillis reddened a little as she said, in a low humble voice,—

"But I do, father, I'm afraid. I often wish I could wear pretty-coloured ribbons round my throat like the squire's daughters."

"It's but natural, minister!" said his wife; "I'm not above liking a silk gown better than a cotton one myself!"

"The love of dress is a temptation and a snare," said he, gravely. "The true adornment is a meek and quiet spirit. And, wife," said he, as a sudden thought crossed his mind, "in that matter I, too, have sinned. I wanted to ask you, could we not sleep in the grey room, instead of our own?"

"Sleep in the grey room?—change our room at this time o' day?" cousin Holman asked, in dismay.

"Yes," said he. "It would save me from a daily temptation to anger. Look at my chin!" he continued; "I cut it this morning—I cut it on Wednesday when I was shaving; I do not know how many times I have cut it of late, and all from impatience at seeing Timothy Cooper at his work in the yard."

"He's a downright lazy tyke!" said cousin Holman. "He's not worth his wage. There's but little he can do, and what he can do, he does badly."

"True," said the minister. "But he is but, so to speak, a half-wit; and yet he has got a wife and children."

"More shame for him!"

"*But that is past* change. And if I turn him off,

no one else will take him on. Yet I cannot help watching him of a morning as he goes sauntering about his work in the yard; and I watch, and I watch, till the old Adam rises strong within me at his lazy ways, and some day, I am afraid, I shall go down and send him about his business—let alone the way in which he makes me cut myself while I am shaving—and then his wife and children will starve. I wish we could move to the grey room."

I do not remember much more of my first visit to the Hope Farm. We went to chapel in Heathbridge, slowly and decorously walking along the lanes, ruddy and tawny with the colouring of the coming autumn. The minister walked a little before us, his hands behind his back, his head bent down, thinking about the discourse to be delivered to his people, cousin Holman said; and we spoke low and quietly, in order not to interrupt his thoughts. But I could not help noticing the respectful greetings which he received from both rich and poor as we went along; greetings which he acknowledged with a kindly wave of his hand, but with no words of reply. As we drew near the town, I could see some of the young fellows we met cast admiring looks on Phillis; and that made me look too. She had on a white gown, and a short black silk cloak, according to the fashion of the day. A straw bonnet with brown ribbon strings; that was all. But what her dress wanted in colour, her sweet bonny face had. The walk made her cheeks bloom like the rose; the very whites of her eyes had a blue tinge in them, and her dark eyelashes brought out the depth of the blue eyes themselves. Her yellow hair was put away as straight as its natural curliness would allow.

If she did not perceive the admiration she excited, I am sure cousin Holman did; for she looked as fierce and as proud as ever her quiet face could look, guarding her treasure, and yet glad to perceive that others could see that it was a treasure. That afternoon I had to return to Eltham to be ready for the next day's work. I found out afterwards that the minister and his family were all "exercised in spirit," as to whether they did well in asking me to repeat my visits at the Hope Farm, seeing that of necessity I must return to Eltham on the Sabbath-day. However, they did go on asking me, and I went on visiting them, whenever my other engagements permitted me, Mr. Holdsworth being in this case, as in all, a kind and indulgent friend. Nor did my new acquaintances oust him from my strong regard and admiration. I had room in my heart for all, I am happy to say, and as far as I can remember, I kept praising each to the other in a manner which, if I had been an older man, living more amongst people of the world, I should have thought unwise, as well as a little ridiculous. It was unwise, certainly, as it was almost sure to cause disappointment if ever they did become acquainted; and perhaps it was ridiculous, though I do not think we any of us thought it so at the time. The minister used to listen to my accounts of Mr. Holdsworth's many accomplishments and various adventures in travel with the truest interest, and most kindly good faith; and Mr. Holdsworth in return liked to hear about my visits to the farm, and description of my cousin's life there—liked it, I mean, as much as he liked anything that was merely narrative, without leading to action.

So I went to the farm certainly, on an average, once a month during that autumn; the course of life there was so peaceful and quiet, that I can only remember one small event, and that was one that I think I took more notice of than any one else: Phillis left off wearing the pinafores that had always been so obnoxious to me; I do not know why they were banished, but on one of my visits I found them replaced by pretty linen aprons in the morning, and a black silk one in the afternoon. And the blue cotton gown became a brown stuff one as winter drew on; this sounds like some book I once read, in which a migration from the blue bed to the brown was spoken of as a great family event.

Towards Christmas my dear father came to see me, and to consult Mr. Holdsworth about the improvement which has since been known as "Manning's driving wheel." Mr. Holdsworth, as I think I have before said, had a very great regard for my father, who had been employed in the same great machine-shop in which Mr. Holdsworth had served his apprenticeship; and he and my father had many mutual jokes about one of those gentlemen-apprentices who used to set about his smith's work in white wash-leather gloves, for fear of spoiling his hands. Mr. Holdsworth often spoke to me about my father as having the same kind of genius for mechanical invention as that of George Stephenson, and my father had come over now to consult him about several improvements, as well as an offer of partnership. It was a great pleasure to me to see the mutual regard of these two men. Mr. Holdsworth, young, handsome, keen, well-dressed, an object of admiration to all the youth of Eltham; my father, in his decent but un-

fashionable Sunday clothes, his plain, sensible face full of hard lines, the marks of toil and thought,—his hands, blackened beyond the power of soap and water by years of labour in the foundry; speaking a strong Northern dialect, while Mr. Holdsworth had a long soft drawl in his voice, as many of the Southerners have, and was reckoned in Eltham to give himself airs.

Although most of my father's leisure time was occupied with conversations about the business I have mentioned, he felt that he ought not to leave Eltham without going to pay his respects to the relations who had been so kind to his son. So he and I ran up on an engine along the incomplete line as far as Heathbridge, and went, by invitation, to spend a day at the farm.

It was odd and yet pleasant to me to perceive how these two men, each having led up to this point such totally dissimilar lives, seemed to come together by instinct, after one quiet straight look into each other's faces. My father was a thin, wiry man of five foot seven; the minister was a broad-shouldered, fresh-coloured man of six foot one; they were neither of them great talkers in general—perhaps the minister the most so—but they spoke much to each other. My father went into the fields with the minister; I think I see him now, with his hands behind his back, listening intently to all explanations of tillage, and the different processes of farming; occasionally taking up an implement, as if unconsciously, and examining it with a critical eye, and now and then asking a question, which I could see was considered as pertinent by his companion. Then we returned to look at the cattle, housed and *bedded in* expectation of the snow-storm hanging

black on the western horizon, and my father learned the points of a cow with as much attention as if he meant to turn farmer. He had his little book that he used for mechanical memoranda and measurements in his pocket, and he took it out to write down "straight back," "small muzzle," "deep barrel," and I know not what else, under the head "cow." He was very critical on a turnip-cutting machine, the clumsiness of which first incited him to talk; and when we went into the house he sat thinking and quiet for a bit, while Phillis and her mother made the last preparations for tea, with a little unheeded apology from cousin Holman, because we were not sitting in the best parlour, which she thought might be chilly on so cold a night. I wanted nothing better than the blazing, crackling fire that sent a glow over all the house-place, and warmed the snowy flags under our feet till they seemed to have more heat than the crimson rug right in front of the fire. After tea, as Phillis and I were talking together very happily, I heard an irrepressible exclamation from cousin Holman,—

"Whatever is the man about!"

And on looking round, I saw my father taking a straight burning stick out of the fire, and, after waiting for a minute, and examining the charred end to see if it was fitted for his purpose, he went to the hard-wood dresser, scoured to the last pitch of whiteness and cleanliness, and began drawing with the stick; the best substitute for chalk or charcoal within his reach, for his pocket-book pencil was not strong or bold enough for his purpose. When he had done, he began to explain his new model of a turnip-cutting machine to the minister, who had been watching him in silence all the time. Cousin Holman

had, in the meantime, taken a duster out of a drawer, and, under pretence of being as much interested as her husband in the drawing, was secretly trying on an outside mark how easily it would come off, and whether it would leave her dresser as white as before. Then Phillis was sent for the book on dynamics, about which I had been consulted during my first visit, and my father had to explain many difficulties, which he did in language as clear as his mind, making drawings with his stick wherever they were needed as illustrations, the minister sitting with his massive head resting on his hands, his elbows on the table, almost unconscious of Phillis, leaning over and listening greedily, with her hand on his shoulder, sucking in information like her father's own daughter. I was rather sorry for cousin Holman; I had been so once or twice before; for do what she would, she was completely unable even to understand the pleasure her husband and daughter took in intellectual pursuits, much less to care in the least herself for the pursuits themselves, and was thus unavoidably thrown out of some of their interests. I had once or twice thought she was a little jealous of her own child, as a fitter companion for her husband than she was herself; and I fancied the minister himself was aware of this feeling, for I had noticed an occasional sudden change of subject, and a tenderness of appeal in his voice as he spoke to her, which always made her look contented and peaceful again. I do not think that Phillis ever perceived these little shadows; in the first place, she had such complete reverence for her parents that she listened to them both as if they had been St. Peter and St. Paul; and besides, *she was* always too much engrossed with

any matter in hand to think about other people's manners and looks.

This night I could see, though she did not, how much she was winning on my father. She asked a few questions which showed that she had followed his explanations up to that point; possibly, too, her unusual beauty might have something to do with his favourable impression of her; but he made no scruple of expressing his admiration of her to her father and mother in her absence from the room; and from that evening I date a project of his which came out to me a day or two afterwards, as we sate in my little three-cornered room in Eltham.

"Paul," he began, "I never thought to be a rich man; but I think it's coming upon me. Some folk are making a deal of my new machine (calling it by its technical name), and Ellison, of the Borough Green Works, has gone so far as to ask me to be his partner."

"Mr. Ellison the Justice!—who lives in King Street? why, he drives his carriage!" said I, doubting, yet exultant.

"Ay, lad, John Ellison. But that's no sign that I shall drive my carriage. Though I should like to save thy mother walking, for she's not so young as she was. But that's a long way off, anyhow. I reckon I should start with a third profit. It might be seven hundred, or it might be more. I should like to have the power to work out some fancies o' mine. I care for that much more than for th' brass. And Ellison has no lads; and by nature the business would come to thee in course o' time. Ellison's lasses are but bits o' things, and are not like to come by husbands just yet; and when they

do, maybe they'll not be in the mechanical line. It will be an opening for thee, lad, if thou art steady. Thou'rt not great shakes, I know, in th' inventing line; but many a one gets on better without having fancies for something he does not see and never has seen. I'm right down glad to see that mother's cousins are such uncommon folk for sense and goodness. I have taken the minister to my heart like a brother; and she is a womanly quiet sort of a body. And I'll tell you frank, Paul, it will be a happy day for me if ever you can come and tell me that Phillis Holman is like to be my daughter. I think if that lass had not a penny, she would be the making of a man; and she'll have yon house and lands, and you may be her match yet in fortune if all goes well."

I was growing as red as fire; I did not know what to say, and yet I wanted to say something; but the idea of having a wife of my own at some future day, though it had often floated about in my own head, sounded so strange when it was thus first spoken about by my father. He saw my confusion, and half smiling said,—

"Well, lad, what dost say to the old father's plans? Thou art but young, to be sure; but when I was thy age, I would ha' given my right hand if I might ha' thought of the chance of wedding the lass I cared for——"

"My mother?" asked I, a little struck by the change of his tone of voice.

"No! not thy mother. Thy mother is a very good woman—none better. No! the lass I cared for at nineteen ne'er knew how I loved her, and a year or two after and she *was dead, and* ne'er knew. I think she would

ha' been glad to ha' known it, poor Molly; but I had to leave the place where we lived for to try to earn my bread—and I meant to come back—but before ever I did, she was dead and gone: I ha' never gone there since. But if you fancy Phillis Holman, and can get her to fancy you, my lad, it shall go different with you, Paul, to what it did with your father."

I took counsel with myself very rapidly, and I came to a clear conclusion.

"Father," said I, "if I fancied Phillis ever so much, she would never fancy me. I like her as much as I could like a sister; and she likes me as if I were her brother—her younger brother."

I could see my father's countenance fall a little.

"You see she's so clever—she's more like a man than a woman—she knows Latin and Greek."

"She'd forget 'em, if she'd a houseful of children," was my father's comment on this.

"But she knows many a thing besides, and is wise as well as learned; she has been so much with her father. She would never think much of me, and I should like my wife to think a deal of her husband."

"It is not just book-learning or the want of it as makes a wife think much or little of her husband," replied my father, evidently unwilling to give up a project which had taken deep root in his mind. "It's a something—I don't rightly know how to call it—if he's manly, and sensible, and straightforward; and I reckon you're that, my boy."

"I don't think I should like to have a wife taller than I am, father," said I, smiling; he smiled too, but not heartily.

"Well," said he, after a pause. "It's but a few days I've been thinking of it, but I'd got as fond of my notion as if it had been a new engine as I'd been planning out. Here's our Paul, thinks I to myself, a good sensible breed o' lad, as has never vexed or troubled his mother or me; with a good business opening out before him, age nineteen, not so bad-looking, though perhaps not to call handsome, and here's his cousin, not too near a cousin, but just nice, as one may say; aged seventeen, good and true, and well brought up to work with her hands as well as her head; a scholar—but that can't be helped, and is more her misfortune than her fault, seeing she is the only child of a scholar—and as I said afore, once she's a wife and a mother she'll forget it all, I'll be bound—with a good fortune in land and house when it shall please the Lord to take her parents to himself; with eyes like poor Molly's for beauty, a colour that comes and goes on a milk-white skin, and as pretty a mouth——"

"Why, Mr. Manning, what fair lady are you describing?" asked Mr. Holdsworth, who had come quickly and suddenly upon our *tête-à-tête*, and had caught my father's last words as he entered the room.

Both my father and I felt rather abashed; it was such an odd subject for us to be talking about; but my father, like a straightforward simple man as he was, spoke out the truth.

"I've been telling Paul of Ellison's offer, and saying how good an opening it made for him——"

"I wish I'd as good," said Mr. Holdsworth. "But has the business a 'pretty mouth?'"

"*You're always so* full of your joking, Mr. Holds-

worth," said my father. "I was going to say that if he and his cousin Phillis Holman liked to make it up between them, I would put no spoke in the wheel."

"Phillis Holman!" said Mr. Holdsworth. "Is she the daughter of the minister-farmer out at Heathbridge? Have I been helping on the course of true love by letting you go there so often? I knew nothing of it."

"There is nothing to know," said I, more annoyed than I chose to show. "There is no more true love in the case than may be between the first brother and sister you may choose to meet. I have been telling father she would never think of me; she's a great deal taller and cleverer; and I'd rather be taller and more learned than my wife when I have one."

"And it is she, then, that has the pretty mouth your father spoke about? I should think that would be an antidote to the cleverness and learning. But I ought to apologize for breaking in upon your last night; I came upon business to your father."

And then he and my father began to talk about many things that had no interest for me just then, and I began to go over again my conversation with my father. The more I thought about it, the more I felt that I had spoken truly about my feelings towards Phillis Holman. I loved her dearly as a sister, but I could never fancy her as my wife. Still less could I think of her ever—yes, *condescending*, that is the word—condescending to marry me. I was roused from a reverie on what I should like my possible wife to be, by hearing my father's warm praise of the minister, as a most unusual character; how they had got back from the diameter of driving-

wheels to the subject of the Holmans I could never tell; but I saw that my father's weighty praises were exciting some curiosity in Mr. Holdsworth's mind; indeed, he said, almost in a voice of reproach,—

"Why, Paul, you never told me what kind of a fellow this minister-cousin of yours was!"

"I don't know that I found out, sir," said I. "But if I had, I don't think you'd have listened to me, as you have done to my father."

"No! most likely not, old fellow," replied Mr. Holdsworth, laughing. And again and afresh I saw what a handsome pleasant clear face his was; and though this evening I had been a bit put out with him—through his sudden coming, and his having heard my father's open-hearted confidence—my hero resumed all his empire over me by his bright merry laugh.

And if he had not resumed his old place that night, he would have done so the next day, when, after my father's departure, Mr. Holdsworth spoke about him with such just respect for his character, such ungrudging admiration of his great mechanical genius, that I was compelled to say, almost unawares,—

"Thank you, sir. I am very much obliged to you."

"Oh, you're not at all. I am only speaking the truth. Here's a Birmingham workman, self-educated, one may say—having never associated with stimulating minds, or had what advantages travel and contact with the world may be supposed to afford—working out his own thoughts into steel and iron, making a scientific name for himself—a fortune, if it pleases him to work for money—and keeping his singleness of heart, his perfect *simplicity of manner*; it puts me out of patience

to think of my expensive schooling, my travels hither and thither, my heaps of scientific books, and I have done nothing to speak of. But it's evidently good blood; there's that Mr. Holman, that cousin of yours, made of the same stuff."

"But he's only cousin because he married my mother's second cousin," said I.

"That knocks a pretty theory on the head, and twice over, too. I should like to make Holman's acquaintance."

"I am sure they would be so glad to see you at Hope Farm," said I, eagerly. "In fact, they've asked me to bring you several times: only I thought you would find it dull."

"Not at all. I can't go yet though, even if you do get me an invitation; for the —— —— Company want me to go to the —— Valley, and look over the ground a bit for them, to see if it would do for a branch line; it's a job which may take me away for some time; but I shall be backwards and forwards, and you're quite up to doing what is needed in my absence; the only work that may be beyond you is keeping old Jevons from drinking."

He went on giving me directions about the management of the men employed on the line, and no more was said then, or for several months, about his going to Hope Farm. He went off into —— Valley, a dark overshadowed dale, where the sun seemed to set behind the hills before four o'clock on midsummer afternoon.

Perhaps it was this that brought on the attack of low fever which he had soon after the beginning of the new *year; he* was very ill for many weeks, almost many

months; a married sister—his only relation, I think—came down from London to nurse him, and I went over to him when I could, to see him, and give him "masculine news," as he called it; reports of the progress of the line, which, I am glad to say, I was able to carry on in his absence, in the slow gradual way which suited the company best, while trade was in a languid state, and money dear in the market. Of course, with this occupation for my scanty leisure, I did not often go over to Hope Farm. Whenever I did go, I met with a thorough welcome; and many inquiries were made as to Holdsworth's illness, and the progress of his recovery.

At length, in June I think it was, he was sufficiently recovered to come back to his lodgings at Eltham, and resume part at least of his work. His sister, Mrs. Robinson, had been obliged to leave him some weeks before, owing to some epidemic amongst her own children. As long as I had seen Mr. Holdsworth in the rooms at the little inn at Hensleydale, where I had been accustomed to look upon him as an invalid, I had not been aware of the visible shake his fever had given to his health. But, once back in the old lodgings, where I had always seen him so buoyant, eloquent, decided, and vigorous in former days, my spirits sank at the change in one whom I had always regarded with a strong feeling of admiring affection. He sank into silence and despondency after the least exertion; he seemed as if he could not make up his mind to any action, or else that, when it was made up, he lacked strength to carry out his purpose. Of course, it was but the natural state of slow convalescence, after so sharp an illness; but, at the time, *I did not know* this, and perhaps I represented

his state as more serious than it was to my kind relations at Hope Farm; who, in their grave, simple, eager way, immediately thought of the only help they could give.

"Bring him out here," said the minister. "Our air here is good to a proverb; the June days are fine; he may loiter away his time in the hay-field, and the sweet smells will be a balm in themselves—better than physic."

"And," said cousin Holman, scarcely waiting for her husband to finish his sentence, "tell him there is new milk and fresh eggs to be had for the asking; it's lucky Daisy has just calved, for her milk is always as good as other cow's cream; and there is the plaid room with the morning sun all streaming in."

Phillis said nothing, but looked as much interested in the project as any one. I took it up myself. I wanted them to see him; him to know them. I proposed it to him when I got home. He was too languid after the day's fatigue, to be willing to make the little exertion of going amongst strangers; and disappointed me by almost declining to accept the invitation I brought. The next morning it was different; he apologized for his ungraciousness of the night before; and told me that he would get all things in train, so as to be ready to go out with me to Hope Farm on the following Saturday.

"For you must go with me, Manning," said he; "I used to be as impudent a fellow as need be, and rather liked going amongst strangers, and making my way; but since my illness I am almost like a girl, and turn hot and cold with shyness, as they do, I fancy."

So it was fixed. We were to go out to Hope Farm on Saturday afternoon; and it was also understood that if the air and the life suited Mr. Holdsworth, he was to

remain there for a week or ten days, doing what work he could at that end of the line, while I took his place at Eltham to the best of my ability. I grew a little nervous, as the time drew near, and wondered how the brilliant Holdsworth would agree with the quiet quaint family of the minister; how they would like him, and many of his half-foreign ways. I tried to prepare him, by telling him from time to time little things about the goings-on at Hope Farm.

"Manning," said he, "I see you don't think I am half good enough for your friends. Out with it, man."

"No," I replied, boldly. "I think you are good; but I don't know if you are quite of their kind of goodness."

"And you've found out already that there is greater chance of disagreement between two 'kinds of goodness,' each having its own idea of right, than between a given goodness and a moderate degree of naughtiness—which last often arises from an indifference to right?"

"I don't know. I think you're talking metaphysics, and I am sure that is bad for you."

"'When a man talks to you in a way that you don't understand about a thing which he does not understand, them's metaphysics.' You remember the clown's definition, don't you, Manning?"

"No, I don't," said I. "But what I do understand is, that you must go to bed; and tell me at what time we must start to-morrow, that I may go to Hepworth, and get those letters written we were talking about this morning."

"Wait till to-morrow, and let us see what the day is like," *he answered*, with such languid indecision as

showed me he was over-fatigued. So I went my way.

The morrow was blue and sunny, and beautiful; the very perfection of an early summer's day. Mr. Holdsworth was all impatience to be off into the country; morning had brought back his freshness and strength, and consequent eagerness to be doing. I was afraid we were going to my cousin's farm rather too early, before they would expect us; but what could I do with such a restless vehement man as Holdsworth was that morning? We came down upon the Hope Farm before the dew was off the grass on the shady side of the lane; the great house-dog was loose, basking in the sun, near the closed side door. I was surprised at this door being shut, for all summer long it was open from morning to night; but it was only on latch. I opened it, Rover watching me with half-suspicious, half-trustful eyes. The room was empty.

"I don't know where they can be," said I. "But come in and sit down while I go and look for them. You must be tired."

"Not I. This sweet balmy air is like a thousand tonics. Besides, this room is hot, and smells of those pungent wood-ashes. What are we to do?"

"Go round to the kitchen. Betty will tell us where they are."

So we went round into the farmyard, Rover accompanying us out of a grave sense of duty. Betty was washing out her milk-pans in the cold bubbling spring-water that constantly trickled in and out of a stone trough. In such weather as this most of her kitchen-work was done out of doors.

"Eh, dear!" said she, "the minister and missus is away at Hornby! They ne'er thought of your coming so betimes! The missus had some errands to do, and she thought as she'd walk with the minister and be back by dinner-time."

"Did not they expect us to dinner?" said I.

"Well, they did, and they did not, as I may say. Missus said to me the cold lamb would do well enough if you did not come; and if you did I was to put on a chicken and some bacon to boil; and I'll go do it now, for it is hard to boil bacon enough."

"And is Phillis gone, too?" Mr. Holdsworth was making friends with Rover.

"No! She's just somewhere about. I reckon you'll find her in the kitchen-garden, getting peas."

"Let us go there," said Holdsworth, suddenly leaving off his play with the dog.

So I led the way into the kitchen-garden. It was in the first promise of a summer profuse in vegetables and fruits. Perhaps it was not so much cared for as other parts of the property; but it was more attended to than most kitchen-gardens belonging to farm-houses. There were borders of flowers along each side of the gravel walks; and there was an old sheltering wall on the north side covered with tolerably choice fruit-trees; there was a slope down to the fish-pond at the end, where there were great strawberry-beds; and raspberry-bushes and rose-bushes grew wherever there was a space; it seemed a chance which had been planted. Long rows of peas stretched at right angles from the main walk, and I saw Phillis stooping down among them, before she saw us. As soon as she heard our cranching steps on the gravel,

she stood up, and shading her eyes from the sun, recognized us. She was quite still for a moment, and then came slowly towards us, blushing a little from evident shyness. I had never seen Phillis shy before.

"This is Mr. Holdsworth, Phillis," said I, as soon as I had shaken hands with her. She glanced up at him, and then looked down, more flushed than ever at his grand formality of taking his hat off and bowing; such manners had never been seen at Hope Farm before.

"Father and mother are out. They will be so sorry; you did not write, Paul, as you said you would."

"It was my fault," said Holdsworth, understanding what she meant as well as if she had put it more fully into words. "I have not yet given up all the privileges of an invalid; one of which is indecision. Last night, when your cousin asked me at what time we were to start, I really could not make up my mind."

Phillis seemed as if she could not make up her mind as to what to do with us. I tried to help her—

"Have you finished getting peas?" taking hold of the half-filled basket she was unconsciously holding in her hand; "or may we stay and help you?"

"If you would. But perhaps it will tire you, sir?" added she, speaking now to Holdsworth.

"Not a bit," said he. "It will carry me back twenty years in my life, when I used to gather peas in my grandfather's garden. I suppose I may eat a few as I go along?"

"Certainly, sir. But if you went to the strawberry-beds you would find some strawberries ripe, and Paul can show you where they are."

"I am afraid you distrust me. I can assure you I

know the exact fulness at which peas should be gathered. I take great care not to pluck them when they are unripe. I will not be turned off, as unfit for my work."

This was a style of half-joking talk that Phillis was not accustomed to. She looked for a moment as if she would have liked to defend herself from the playful charge of distrust made against her, but she ended by not saying a word. We all plucked our peas in busy silence for the next five minutes. Then Holdsworth lifted himself up from between the rows, and said, a little wearily,—

"I am afraid I must strike work. I am not as strong as I fancied myself."

Phillis was full of penitence immediately. He did, indeed, look pale; and she blamed herself for having allowed him to help her.

"It was very thoughtless of me. I did not know—I thought, perhaps, you really liked it. I ought to have offered you something to eat, sir! Oh, Paul, we have gathered quite enough; how stupid I was to forget that Mr. Holdsworth had been ill!" And in a blushing hurry she led the way towards the house. We went in, and she moved a heavy cushioned chair forwards, into which Holdsworth was only too glad to sink. Then with deft and quiet speed she brought in a little tray, wine, water, cake, home-made bread, and newly-churned butter. She stood by in some anxiety till, after bite and sup, the colour returned to Mr. Holdsworth's face, and he would fain have made us some laughing apologies for the fright he had given us. But then Phillis drew back from her innocent show of care and interest, and relapsed into the *cold shyness habitual* to her when she was first thrown

into the company of strangers. She brought out the last week's county paper (which Mr. Holdsworth had read five days ago), and then quietly withdrew; and then he subsided into languor, leaning back and shutting his eyes as if he would go to sleep. I stole into the kitchen after Phillis; but she had made the round of the corner of the house outside, and I found her sitting on the horse-mount, with her basket of peas, and a basin into which she was shelling them. Rover lay at her feet, snapping now and then at the flies. I went to her, and tried to help her; but somehow the sweet crisp young peas found their way more frequently into my mouth than into the basket, while we talked together in a low tone, fearful of being overheard through the open casements of the house-place in which Holdsworth was resting.

"Don't you think him handsome?" asked I.

"Perhaps—yes—I have hardly looked at him," she replied. "But is not he very like a foreigner?"

"Yes, he cuts his hair foreign fashion," said I.

"I like an Englishman to look like an Englishman."

"I don't think he thinks about it. He says he began that way when he was in Italy, because everybody wore it so, and it is natural to keep it on in England."

"Not if he began it in Italy because everybody there wore it so. Everybody here wears it differently."

I was a little offended with Phillis's logical fault-finding with my friend; and I determined to change the subject.

"When is your mother coming home?"

"I should think she might come any time now; but she had to go and see Mrs. Morton, who was ill, and

she might be kept, and not be home till dinner. Don't you think you ought to go and see how Mr. Holdsworth is going on, Paul? He may be faint again."

I went at her bidding; but there was no need for it. Mr. Holdsworth was up, standing by the window, his hands in his pockets; he had evidently been watching us. He turned away as I entered.

"So that is the girl I found your good father planning for your wife, Paul, that evening when I interrupted you! Are you of the same coy mind still? It did not look like it a minute ago."

"Phillis and I understand each other," I replied, sturdily. "We are like brother and sister. She would not have me as a husband if there was not another man in the world; and it would take a deal to make me think of her—as my father wishes" (somehow I did not like to say "as a wife"), "but we love each other dearly."

"Well, I am rather surprised at it—not at your loving each other in a brother-and-sister kind of way—but at your finding it so impossible to fall in love with such a beautiful woman."

Woman! beautiful woman! I had thought of Phillis as a comely but awkward girl; and I could not banish the pinafore from my mind's eye when I tried to picture her to myself. Now I turned, as Mr. Holdsworth had done, to look at her again out of the window: she had just finished her task, and was standing up, her back to us, holding the basket, and the basin in it, high in air, out of Rover's reach, who was giving vent to his delight at the probability of a change of place by glad leaps and barks, and snatches at what he imagined to be a withheld prize. At *length* she grew tired of their mutual

play, and with a feint of striking him, and a "Down, Rover! do hush!" she looked towards the window where we were standing, as if to reassure herself that no one had been disturbed by the noise, and seeing us, she coloured all over, and hurried away, with Rover still curving in sinuous lines about her as she walked.

"I should like to have sketched her," said Mr. Holdsworth, as he turned away. He went back to his chair, and rested in silence for a minute or two. Then he was up again.

"I would give a good deal for a book," said he. "It would keep me quiet." He began to look round; there were a few volumes at one end of the shovel-board.

"Fifth volume of Matthew Henry's *Commentary*," said he, reading their titles aloud. "*Housewife's complete Manual; Berridge on Prayer; L'Inferno*—Dante!" in great surprise. "Why, who reads this?"

"I told you Phillis read it. Don't you remember? She knows Latin and Greek, too."

"To be sure! I remember! But somehow I never put two and two together. That quiet girl, full of household work, is the wonderful scholar, then, that put you to rout with her questions when you first began to come here. To be sure, 'Cousin Phillis!' What's here: a paper with the hard, obsolete words written out. I wonder what sort of a dictionary she has got. Baretti won't tell her all these words. Stay! I have got a pencil here. I'll write down the most accepted meanings, and save her a little trouble."

So he took her book and the paper back to the little round table, and employed himself in writing explanations and definitions of the words which had troubled

her. I was not sure if he was not taking a liberty: it did not quite please me, and yet I did not know why. He had only just done, and replaced the paper in the book, and put the latter back in its place, when I heard the sound of wheels stopping in the lane, and looking out, I saw cousin Holman getting out of a neighbour's gig, making her little curtsey of acknowledgment, and then coming towards the house. I went out to meet her.

"Oh, Paul!" said she, "I am so sorry I was kept; and then Thomas Dobson said if I would wait a quarter of an hour he would—— But where's your friend Mr. Holdsworth? I hope he is come?"

Just then he came out, and with his pleasant cordial manner took her hand, and thanked her for asking him to come out here to get strong.

"I'm sure I am very glad to see you, sir. It was the minister's thought. I took it into my head you would be dull in our quiet house, for Paul says you've been such a great traveller; but the minister said that dulness would perhaps suit you while you were but ailing, and that I was to ask Paul to be here as much as he could. I hope you'll find yourself happy with us, I'm sure, sir. Has Phillis given you something to eat and drink, I wonder? there's a deal in eating a little often, if one has to get strong after an illness." And then she began to question him as to the details of his indisposition in her simple motherly way. He seemed at once to understand her, and to enter into friendly relations with her. It was not quite the same in the evening when the minister came home. Men have always a little natural antipathy *to get over* when they first meet as strangers.

But in this case each was disposed to make an effort to like the other; only each was to each a specimen of an unknown class. I had to leave the Hope Farm on Sunday afternoon, as I had Mr. Holdsworth's work as well as my own to look to in Eltham; and I was not at all sure how things would go on during the week that Holdsworth was to remain on his visit; I had been once or twice in hot water already at the near clash of opinions between the minister and my much-vaunted friend. On the Wednesday I received a short note from Holdsworth; he was going to stay on, and return with me on the following Sunday, and he wanted me to send him a certain list of books, his theodolite, and other surveying instruments, all of which could easily be conveyed down the line to Heathbridge. I went to his lodgings and picked out the books. Italian, Latin, trigonometry; a pretty considerable parcel they made, besides the implements. I began to be curious as to the general progress of affairs at Hope Farm, but I could not go over till the Saturday. At Heathbridge I found Holdsworth, come to meet me. He was looking quite a different man to what I had left him; embrowned, sparkles in his eyes, so languid before. I told him how much stronger he looked.

"Yes!" said he. "I am fidging fain to be at work again. Last week I dreaded the thoughts of my employment; now I am full of desire to begin. This week in the country has done wonders for me."

"You have enjoyed yourself, then?"

"Oh! it has been perfect in its way. Such a thorough country life! and yet removed from the dulness which I always used to fancy accompanied country life, by the

extraordinary intelligence of the minister. I have fallen into calling him 'the minister,' like every one else."

"You get on with him, then?" said I. "I was a little afraid."

"I was on the verge of displeasing him once or twice, I fear, with random assertions and exaggerated expressions, such as one always uses with other people, and thinks nothing of; but I tried to check myself when I saw how it shocked the good man; and really it is very wholesome exercise, this trying to make one's words represent one's thoughts, instead of merely looking to their effect on others."

"Then you are quite friends now?" I asked.

"Yes, thoroughly; at any rate as far as I go. I never met with a man with such a desire for knowledge. In information, as far as it can be gained from books, he far exceeds me on most subjects; but then I have travelled and seen—— Were not you surprised at the list of things I sent for?"

"Yes; I thought it did not promise much rest.'

"Oh! some of the books were for the minister, and some for his daughter. (I call her Phillis to myself, but I use euphuisms in speaking about her to others. I don't like to seem familiar, and yet Miss Holman is a term I have never heard used.)"

"I thought the Italian books were for her."

"Yes! Fancy her trying at Dante for her first book in Italian! I had a capital novel by Manzoni, *I Promessi Sposi*, just the thing for a beginner; and if she must still puzzle out Dante, my dictionary is far *better than hers.*"

"Then she found out you had written those definitions on her list of words?"

"Oh! yes"—with a smile of amusement and pleasure. He was going to tell me what had taken place, but checked himself.

"But I don't think the minister will like your having given her a novel to read?"

"Pooh! What can be more harmless? Why make a bugbear of a word? It is as pretty and innocent a tale as can be met with. You don't suppose they take *Virgil* for gospel?"

By this time we were at the farm. I think Phillis gave me a warmer welcome than usual, and cousin Holman was kindness itself. Yet somehow I felt as if I had lost my place, and that Holdsworth had taken it. He knew all the ways of the house; he was full of little filial attentions to cousin Holman; he treated Phillis with the affectionate condescension of an elder brother; not a bit more; not in any way different. He questioned me about the progress of affairs in Eltham with eager interest.

"Ah!" said cousin Holman, "you'll be spending a different kind of time next week to what you have done this! I can see how busy you'll make yourself! But if you don't take care you'll be ill again, and have to come back to our quiet ways of going on."

"Do you suppose I shall need to be ill to wish to come back here?" he answered, warmly. "I am only afraid you have treated me so kindly that I shall always be turning up on your hands."

"That's right," she replied. "Only don't go and *make yourself ill* by over-work. I hope you'll go on

with a cup of new milk every morning, for I am sure that is the best medicine; and put a teaspoonful of rum in it, if you like; many a one speaks highly of that, only we had no rum in the house."

I brought with me an atmosphere of active life which I think he had begun to miss; and it was natural that he should seek my company, after his week of retirement. Once I saw Phillis looking at us as we talked together with a kind of wistful curiosity; but as soon as she caught my eye, she turned away, blushing deeply.

That evening I had a little talk with the minister. I strolled along the Hornby road to meet him; for Holdsworth was giving Phillis an Italian lesson, and cousin Holman had fallen asleep over her work.

Somehow, and not unwillingly on my part, our talk fell on the friend whom I had introduced to the Hope Farm.

"Yes! I like him!" said the minister, weighing his words a little as he spoke. "I like him. I hope I am justified in doing it, but he takes hold of me, as it were; and I have almost been afraid lest he carries me away, in spite of my judgment."

"He is a good fellow; indeed he is," said I. "My father thinks well of him; and I have seen a deal of him. I would not have had him come here if I did not know that you would approve of him."

"Yes," (once more hesitating,) "I like him, and I think he is an upright man; there is a want of seriousness in his talk at times, but, at the same time, it is wonderful to listen to him! He makes Horace and Virgil living, *instead of* dead, by the stories he tells

me of his sojourn in the very countries where they lived, and where to this day, he says—— But it is like dram-drinking. I listen to him till I forget my duties, and am carried off my feet. Last Sabbath evening he led us away into talk on profane subjects ill befitting the day."

By this time we were at the house, and our conversation stopped. But before the day was out, I saw the unconscious hold that my friend had got over all the family. And no wonder: he had seen so much and done so much as compared to them, and he told about it all so easily and naturally, and yet as I never heard any one else do; and his ready pencil was out in an instant to draw on scraps of paper all sorts of illustrations—modes of drawing up water in Northern Italy, wine-carts, buffaloes, stone-pines, I know not what. After we had all looked at these drawings, Phillis gathered them together, and took them.

It is many years since I have seen thee, Edward Holdsworth, but thou wast a delightful fellow! Ay, and a good one too; though much sorrow was caused by thee!

PART III.

Just after this I went home for a week's holiday. Everything was prospering there; my father's new partnership gave evident satisfaction to both parties. *There was no display* of increased wealth in our modest

household; but my mother had a few extra comforts provided for her by her husband. I made acquaintance with Mr. and Mrs. Ellison, and first saw pretty Margaret Ellison, who is now my wife. When I returned to Eltham, I found that a step was decided upon, which had been in contemplation for some time; that Holdsworth and I should remove our quarters to Hornby; our daily presence, and as much of our time as possible, being required for the completion of the line at that end.

Of course this led to greater facility of intercourse with the Hope Farm people. We could easily walk out there after our day's work was done, and spend a balmy evening hour or two, and yet return before the summer's twilight had quite faded away. Many a time, indeed, we would fain have stayed longer—the open air, the fresh and pleasant country, made so agreeable a contrast to the close, hot town lodgings which I shared with Mr. Holdsworth; but early hours, both at eve and morn, were an imperative necessity with the minister, and he made no scruple at turning either or both of us out of the house directly after evening prayer, or "exercise," as he called it. The remembrance of many a happy day, and of several little scenes, comes back upon me as I think of that summer. They rise like pictures to my memory, and in this way I can date their succession; for I know that corn harvest must have come after hay-making, apple-gathering after corn-harvest.

The removal to Hornby took up some time, during which we had neither of us any leisure to go out to the Hope Farm. Mr. Holdsworth had been out there once during my absence at home. One sultry evening, when *work was done, he* proposed our walking out and paying

the Holmans a visit. It so happened that I had omitted to write my usual weekly letter home in our press of business, and I wished to finish that before going out. Then he said that he would go, and that I could follow him if I liked. This I did in about an hour; the weather was so oppressive, I remember, that I took off my coat as I walked, and hung it over my arm. All the doors and windows at the farm were open when I arrived there, and every tiny leaf on the trees was still. The silence of the place was profound; at first I thought that it was entirely deserted; but just as I drew near the door I heard a weak sweet voice begin to sing; it was cousin Holman, all by herself in the house-place, piping up a hymn, as she knitted away in the clouded light. She gave me a kindly welcome, and poured out all the small domestic news of the fortnight past upon me, and, in return, I told her about my own people and my visit at home.

"Where were the rest?" at length I asked.

Betty and the men were in the field helping with the last load of hay, for the minister said there would be rain before the morning. Yes, and the minister himself, and Phillis, and Mr. Holdsworth, were all there helping. She thought that she herself could have done something; but perhaps she was the least fit for hay-making of any one; and somebody must stay at home and take care of the house, there were so many tramps about; if I had not had something to do with the railroad she would have called them navvies. I asked her if she minded being left alone, as I should like to go and help; and having her full and glad permission to leave her *alone, I went off,* following her directions: through the

farmyard, past the cattle-pond, into the ash-field, beyond into the higher field with two holly-bushes in the middle. I arrived there: there was Betty with all the farming men, and a cleared field, and a heavily laden cart; one man at the top of the great pile ready to catch the fragrant hay which the others threw up to him with their pitchforks; a little heap of cast-off clothes in a corner of the field (for the heat, even at seven o'clock, was insufferable), a few cans and baskets, and Rover lying by them panting, and keeping watch. Plenty of loud, hearty, cheerful talking; but no minister, no Phillis, no Mr. Holdsworth. Betty saw me first, and understanding who it was that I was in search of, she came towards me.

"They're out yonder—agait wi' them things o' Measter Holdsworth's."

So "out yonder" I went; out on to a broad upland common, full of red sand-banks, and sweeps and hollows; bordered by dark firs, purple in the coming shadows, but near at hand all ablaze with flowering gorse, or, as we call it in the south, furze-bushes, which, seen against the belt of distant trees, appeared brilliantly golden. On this heath, a little way from the field-gate, I saw the three. I counted their heads, joined together in an eager group over Holdsworth's theodolite. He was teaching the minister the practical art of surveying and taking a level. I was wanted to assist, and was quickly set to work to hold the chain. Phillis was as intent as her father; she had hardly time to greet me, so desirous was she to hear some answer to her father's question.

So we went on, the dark clouds still gathering, for perhaps *five minutes* after my arrival. Then came the

blinding lightning and the rumble and quick-following rattling peal of thunder right over our heads. It came sooner than I expected, sooner than they had looked for: the rain delayed not; it came pouring down; and what were we to do for shelter? Phillis had nothing on but her indoor things—no bonnet, no shawl. Quick as the darting lightning around us, Holdsworth took off his coat and wrapped it round her neck and shoulders, and, almost without a word, hurried us all into such poor shelter as one of the overhanging sand-banks could give. There we were, cowered down, close together, Phillis innermost, almost too tightly packed to free her arms enough to divest herself of the coat, which she, in her turn, tried to put lightly over Holdsworth's shoulders. In doing so she touched his shirt.

"Oh, how wet you are!" she cried, in pitying dismay; "and you've hardly got over your fever! Oh, Mr. Holdsworth, I am so sorry!" He turned his head a little, smiling at her.

"If I do catch cold, it is all my fault for having deluded you into staying out here!" but she only murmured again, "I am so sorry."

The minister spoke now. "It is a regular downpour. Please God that the hay is saved! But there is no likelihood of its ceasing, and I had better go home at once, and send you all some wraps; umbrellas will not be safe with yonder thunder and lightning."

Both Holdsworth and I offered to go instead of him; but he was resolved, although perhaps it would have been wiser if Holdsworth, wet as he already was, had kept himself in exercise. As he moved off, Phillis crept out, and *could see on to* the storm-swept heath. Part of Holds-

worth's apparatus still remained exposed to all the rain. Before we could have any warning, she had rushed out of the shelter and collected the various things, and brought them back in triumph to where we crouched. Holdsworth had stood up, uncertain whether to go to her assistance or not. She came running back, her long lovely hair floating and dripping, her eyes glad and bright, and her colour freshened to a glow of health by the exercise and the rain.

"Now, Miss Holman, that's what I call wilful," said Holdsworth, as she gave them to him. "No, I won't thank you" (his looks were thanking her all the time). "My little bit of dampness annoyed you, because you thought I had got wet in your service; so you were determined to make me as uncomfortable as you were yourself. It was an unchristian piece of revenge!"

His tone of badinage (as the French call it) would have been palpable enough to any one accustomed to the world; but Phillis was not, and it distressed or rather bewildered her. "Unchristian" had to her a very serious meaning; it was not a word to be used lightly; and though she did not exactly understand what wrong it was that she was accused of doing, she was evidently desirous to throw off the imputation. At first her earnestness to disclaim unkind motives amused Holdsworth; while his light continuance of the joke perplexed her still more; but at last he said something gravely, and in too low a tone for me to hear, which made her all at once become silent, and called out her blushes. After a while, the minister came back, a moving mass of shawls, cloaks, and umbrellas. Phillis kept very close to *her father's side* on our return to the farm. She

appeared to me to be shrinking away from Holdsworth, while he had not the slightest variation in his manner from what it usually was in his graver moods; kind, protecting, and thoughtful towards her. Of course, there was a great commotion about our wet clothes; but I name the little events of that evening now because I wondered at the time what he had said in that low voice to silence Phillis so effectually, and because, in thinking of their intercourse by the light of future events, that evening stands out with some prominence.

I have said that after our removal to Hornby our communications with the farm became almost of daily occurrence. Cousin Holman and I were the two who had least to do with this intimacy. After Mr. Holdsworth regained his health, he too often talked above her head in intellectual matters, and too often in his light bantering tone for her to feel quite at her ease with him. I really believe that he adopted this latter tone in speaking to her because he did not know what to talk about to a purely motherly woman, whose intellect had never been cultivated, and whose loving heart was entirely occupied with her husband, her child, her household affairs, and, perhaps, a little with the concerns of the members of her husband's congregation, because they, in a way, belonged to her husband. I had noticed before that she had fleeting shadows of jealousy even of Phillis, when her daughter and her husband appeared to have strong interests and sympathies in things which were quite beyond her comprehension. I had noticed it in my first acquaintance with them, I say, and had admired the delicate tact which made the minister, on *such occasions*, bring the conversation back to such

subjects as those on which his wife, with her practical experience of every-day life, was an authority; while Phillis, devoted to her father, unconsciously followed his lead, totally unaware, in her filial reverence, of his motive for doing so.

To return to Holdsworth. The minister had at more than one time spoken of him to me with slight distrust, principally occasioned by the suspicion that his careless words were not always those of soberness and truth. But it was more as a protest against the fascination which the younger man evidently exercised over the elder one—more as it were to strengthen himself against yielding to this fascination—that the minister spoke out to me about this failing of Holdsworth's, as it appeared to him. In return Holdsworth was subdued by the minister's uprightness and goodness, and delighted with his clear intellect—his strong healthy craving after further knowledge. I never met two men who took more thorough pleasure and relish in each other's society. To Phillis his relation continued that of an elder brother: he directed her studies into new paths, he patiently drew out the expression of many of her thoughts, and perplexities, and unformed theories—scarcely ever now falling into the vein of banter which she was so slow to understand.

One day—harvest-time—he had been drawing on a loose piece of paper—sketching ears of corn, sketching carts drawn by bullocks and laden with grapes—all the time talking with Phillis and me, cousin Holman putting in her not pertinent remarks, when suddenly he said to Phillis,—

"*Keep your head still*; I see a sketch! I have often

tried to draw your head from memory, and failed; but I think I can do it now. If I succeed I will give it to your mother. You would like a portrait of your daughter as Ceres, would you not, ma'am?"

"I should like a picture of her; yes, very much, thank you, Mr. Holdsworth; but if you put that straw in her hair," (he was holding some wheat ears above her passive head, looking at the effect with an artistic eye,) "you'll ruffle her hair. Phillis, my dear, if you're to have your picture taken, go upstairs, and brush your hair smooth."

"Not on any account. I beg your pardon, but I want hair loosely flowing."

He began to draw, looking intently at Phillis; I could see this stare of his discomposed her—her colour came and went, her breath quickened with the consciousness of his regard; at last, when he said, "Please look at me for a minute or two, I want to get in the eyes," she looked up at him, quivered, and suddenly got up and left the room. He did not say a word, but went on with some other part of the drawing; his silence was unnatural, and his dark cheek blanched a little. Cousin Holman looked up from her work, and put her spectacles down.

"What's the matter? Where is she gone?"

Holdsworth never uttered a word, but went on drawing. I felt obliged to say something; it was stupid enough, but stupidity was better than silence just then.

"I'll go and call her," said I. So I went into the hall, and to the bottom of the stairs; but just as I was *going to call Phillis*, she came down swiftly with her

bonnet on, and saying, " I'm going to father in the five-acre," passed out by the open " rector," right in front of the house-place windows, and out at the little white side-gate. She had been seen by her mother and Holdsworth, as she passed; so there was no need for explanation, only cousin Holman and I had a long discussion as to whether she could have found the room too hot, or what had occasioned her sudden departure. Holdsworth was very quiet during all the rest of that day; nor did he resume the portrait-taking by his own desire, only at my cousin Holman's request the next time that he came; and then he said he should not require any more formal sittings, for only such a slight sketch as he felt himself capable of making. Phillis was just the same as ever the next time I saw her after her abrupt passing me in the hall. She never gave any explanation of her rush out of the room.

So all things went on, at least as far as my observation reached at the time, or memory can recall now, till the great apple-gathering of the year. The nights were frosty, the mornings and evenings were misty, but at mid-day all was sunny and bright, and it was one mid-day that both of us being on the line near Heathbridge, and knowing that they were gathering apples at the farm, we resolved to spend the men's dinner-hour in going over there. We found the great clothes-baskets full of apples, scenting the house, and stopping up the way; and an universal air of merry contentment with this the final produce of the year. The yellow leaves hung on the trees ready to flutter down at the slightest puff of air; the great bushes of Michaelmas daisies in the kitchen-*garden* were making their last show of

flowers. We must needs taste the fruit off the different trees, and pass our judgment as to their flavour; and we went away with our pockets stuffed with those that we liked best. As we had passed to the orchard, Holdsworth had admired and spoken about some flower which he saw; it so happened he had never seen this old-fashioned kind since the days of his boyhood. I do not know whether he had thought anything more about this chance speech of his, but I know I had not—when Phillis, who had been missing just at the last moment of our hurried visit, re-appeared with a little nosegay of this same flower, which she was tying up with a blade of grass. She offered it to Holdsworth as he stood with her father on the point of departure. I saw their faces. I saw for the first time an unmistakable look of love in his black eyes; it was more than gratitude for the little attention; it was tender and beseeching—passionate. She shrank from it in confusion, her glance fell on me; and, partly to hide her emotion, partly out of real kindness at what might appear ungracious neglect of an older friend, she flew off to gather me a few late-blooming China roses. But it was the first time she had ever done anything of the kind for me.

We had to walk fast to be back on the line before the men's return, so we spoke but little to each other, and of course the afternoon was too much occupied for us to have any talk. In the evening we went back to our joint lodgings in Hornby. There, on the table, lay a letter for Holdsworth, which had been forwarded to him from Eltham. As our tea was ready, and I had had nothing to eat since morning, I fell to directly without *paying much* attention to my companion as he opened

and read his letter. He was very silent for a few minutes; at length he said,—

"Old fellow! I'm going to leave you!"

"Leave me!" said I. "How? When?"

"This letter ought to have come to hand sooner. It is from Greathed the engineer" (Greathed was well known in those days; he is dead now, and his name half-forgotten); "he wants to see me about some business; in fact, I may as well tell you, Paul, this letter contains a very advantageous proposal for me to go out to Canada, and superintend the making of a line there."

I was in utter dismay.

"But what will our company say to that?"

"Oh, Greathed has the superintendence of this line, you know; and he is going to be engineer in chief to this Canadian line; many of the shareholders in this company are going in for the other, so I fancy they will make no difficulty in following Greathed's lead. He says he has a young man ready to put in my place."

"I hate him," said I.

"Thank you," said Holdsworth, laughing.

"But you must not," he resumed; "for this is a very good thing for me, and, of course, if no one can be found to take my inferior work, I can't be spared to take the superior. I only wish I had received this letter a day sooner. Every hour is of consequence, for Greathed says they are threatening a rival line. Do you know, Paul, I almost fancy I must go up to-night? I can take an engine back to Eltham, and catch the night train. I should not like Greathed to think me lukewarm."

"But you'll come back?" I asked, distressed at the thought of *this sudden* parting.

"Oh, yes! At least I hope so. They may want me to go out by the next steamer, that will be on Saturday." He began to eat and drink standing, but I think he was quite unconscious of the nature of either his food or his drink.

"I will go to-night. Activity and readiness go a long way in our profession. Remember that, my boy! I hope I shall come back, but if I don't, be sure and recollect all the words of wisdom that have fallen from my lips. Now where's the portmanteau? If I can gain half an hour for a gathering up of my things in Eltham, so much the better. I'm clear of debt anyhow; and what I owe for my lodgings you can pay for me out of my quarter's salary, due November 4th."

"Then you don't think you will come back?" I said, despondingly.

"I will come back some time, never fear," said he, kindly. "I may be back in a couple of days, having been found incompetent for the Canadian work; or I may not be wanted to go out so soon as I now anticipate. Anyhow you don't suppose I am going to forget you, Paul—this work out there ought not to take me above two years, and, perhaps, after that, we may be employed together again."

Perhaps! I had very little hope. (The same kind of happy days never returns.) However, I did all I could in helping him: clothes, papers, books, instruments; how we pushed and struggled—how I stuffed. All was done in a much shorter time than we had calculated upon, when I had run down to the sheds to order the engine. I was going to drive him to Eltham. We sat *ready for a summons.* Holdsworth took up the little

nosegay that he had brought away from the Hope Farm, and had laid on the mantel-piece on first coming into the room. He smelt at it, and caressed it with his lips.

"What grieves me is that I did not know—that I have not said good-by to—to them."

He spoke in a grave tone, the shadow of the coming separation falling upon him at last.

"I will tell them," said I. "I am sure they will be very sorry." Then we were silent.

"I never liked any family so much."

"I knew you would like them."

"How one's thoughts change,—this morning I was full of a hope, Paul." He paused, and then he said,—

"You put that sketch in carefully?"

"That outline of a head?" asked I. But I knew he meant an abortive sketch of Phillis, which had not been successful enough for him to complete it with shading or colouring.

"Yes. What a sweet innocent face it is! and yet so—Oh, dear!"

He sighed and got up, his hands in his pockets, to walk up and down the room in evident disturbance of mind. He suddenly stopped opposite to me.

"You'll tell them how it all was. Be sure and tell the good minister that I was so sorry not to wish him good-by, and to thank him and his wife for all their kindness. As for Phillis,—please God in two years I'll be back and tell her myself all in my heart."

"You love Phillis, then?" said I.

"Love her!—Yes, that I do. Who could help it, seeing her as I have done? Her character as unusual *and rare as her beauty*! God bless her! God keep

her in her high tranquillity, her pure innocence.—Two years! It is a long time.—But she lives in such seclusion, almost like the sleeping beauty, Paul,"—(he was smiling now, though a minute before I had thought him on the verge of tears,)—"but I shall come back like a prince from Canada, and waken her to my love. I can't help hoping that it won't be difficult, eh, Paul?"

This touch of coxcombry displeased me a little, and I made no answer. He went on, half apologetically,—

"You see, the salary they offer me is large; and beside that, this experience will give me a name which will entitle me to expect a still larger in any future undertaking."

"That won't influence Phillis."

"No! but it will make me more eligible in the eyes of her father and mother."

I made no answer.

"You give me your best wishes, Paul," said he, almost pleading. "You would like me for a cousin?"

I heard the scream and whistle of the engine ready down at the sheds.

"Ay, that I should," I replied, suddenly softened towards my friend now that he was going away. "I wish you were to be married to-morrow, and I were to be best man."

"Thank you, lad. Now for this cursed portmanteau (how the minister would be shocked); but it is heavy!" and off we sped into the darkness.

He only just caught the night train at Eltham, and I slept, desolately enough, at my old lodgings at Miss *Dawson's, for that* night. Of course the next few days

I was busier than ever, doing both his work and my own. Then came a letter from him, very short and affectionate. He was going out in the Saturday steamer, as he had more than half expected; and by the following Monday the man who was to succeed him would be down at Eltham. There was a P.S., with only these words:—

"My nosegay goes with me to Canada, but I do not need it to remind me of Hope Farm."

Saturday came; but it was very late before I could go out to the farm. It was a frosty night, the stars shone clear above me, and the road was crisping beneath my feet. They must have heard my footsteps before I got up to the house. They were sitting at their usual employments in the house-place when I went in. Phillis's eyes went beyond me in their look of welcome, and then fell in quiet disappointment on her work.

"And where's Mr. Holdsworth?" asked cousin Holman, in a minute or two. "I hope his cold is not worse,—I did not like his short cough."

I laughed awkwardly; for I felt that I was the bearer of unpleasant news.

"His cold had need be better—for he's gone—gone away to Canada!"

I purposely looked away from Phillis, as I thus abruptly told my news.

"To Canada!" said the minister.

"Gone away!" said his wife.

But no word from Phillis.

"Yes!" said I. "He found a letter at Hornby when we got home the other night—when we got home from *here; he ought* to have got it sooner; he was

ordered to go up to London directly, and to see some people about a new line in Canada, and he's gone to lay it down; he has sailed to-day. He was sadly grieved not to have time to come out and wish you all good-by; but he started for London within two hours after he got that letter. He bade me thank you most gratefully for all your kindnesses; he was very sorry not to come here once again."

Phillis got up and left the room with noiseless steps.

"I am very sorry," said the minister.

"I am sure so am I!" said cousin Holman. "I was real fond of that lad ever since I nursed him last June after that bad fever."

The minister went on asking me questions respecting Holdsworth's future plans; and brought out a large old-fashioned atlas, that he might find out the exact places between which the new railroad was to run. Then supper was ready; it was always on the table as soon as the clock on the stairs struck eight, and down came Phillis—her face white and set, her dry eyes looking defiance to me, for I am afraid I hurt her maidenly pride by my glance of sympathetic interest as she entered the room. Never a word did she say—never a question did she ask about the absent friend, yet she forced herself to talk.

And so it was all the next day. She was as pale as could be, like one who has received some shock; but she would not let me talk to her, and she tried hard to behave as usual. Two or three times I repeated, in public, the various affectionate messages to the family with which I was charged by Holdsworth; but she took *no more notice* of them than if my words had been

empty air. And in this mood I left her on the Sabbath evening.

My new master was not half so indulgent as my old one. He kept up strict discipline as to hours, so that it was some time before I could again go out, even to pay a call at the Hope Farm.

It was a cold misty evening in November. The air, even indoors, seemed full of haze; yet there was a great log burning on the hearth, which ought to have made the room cheerful. Cousin Holman and Phillis were sitting at the little round table before the fire, working away in silence. The minister had his books out on the dresser, seemingly deep in study, by the light of his solitary candle; perhaps the fear of disturbing him made the unusual stillness of the room. But a welcome was ready for me from all; not noisy, not demonstrative—that it never was; my damp wrappers were taken off, the next meal was hastened, and a chair placed for me on one side of the fire, so that I pretty much commanded a view of the room. My eye caught on Phillis, looking so pale and weary, and with a sort of aching tone (if I may call it so) in her voice. She was doing all the accustomed things—fulfilling small household duties, but somehow differently—I can't tell you how, for she was just as deft and quick in her movements, only the light spring was gone out of them. Cousin Holman began to question me; even the minister put aside his books, and came and stood on the opposite side of the fire-place, to hear what waft of intelligence I brought. I had first to tell them why I had not been to *see them for so long*—more than five weeks. The

answer was simple enough; business and the necessity of attending strictly to the orders of a new superintendent, who had not yet learned trust, much less indulgence. The minister nodded his approval of my conduct, and said,—

"Right, Paul! 'Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh.' I have had my fears lest you had too much licence under Edward Holdsworth."

"Ah," said cousin Holman, "poor Mr. Holdsworth, he'll be on the salt seas by this time!"

"No, indeed," said I, "he's landed. I have had a letter from him from Halifax."

Immediately a shower of questions fell thick upon me. When? How? What was he doing? How did he like it? What sort of a voyage? &c.

"Many is the time we have thought of him when the wind was blowing so hard; the old quince-tree is blown down, Paul, that on the right-hand of the great pear-tree; it was blown down last Monday week, and it was that night that I asked the minister to pray in an especial manner for all them that went down in ships upon the great deep, and he said then, that Mr. Holdsworth might be already landed; but I said, even if the prayer did not fit him, it was sure to be fitting somebody out at sea, who would need the Lord's care. Both Phillis and I thought he would be a month on the seas."

Phillis began to speak, but her voice did not come rightly at first. It was a little higher pitched than usual, when she said—

"We thought he would be a month if he went in a sailing-vessel, or perhaps longer. I suppose he went in *a steamer?*"

"Old Obadiah Grimshaw was more than six weeks in getting to America," observed cousin Holman.

"I presume he cannot as yet tell how he likes his new work?" asked the minister.

"No! he is but just landed; it is but one page long. I'll read it to you, shall I?—

"DEAR PAUL,—

"WE are safe on shore, after a rough passage. Thought you would like to hear this, but homeward-bound steamer is making signals for letters. Will write again soon. It seems a year since I left Hornby. Longer since I was at the farm. I have got my nosegay safe. Remember me to the Holmans.

"Yours, "E. H."

"That's not much, certainly," said the minister. "But it's a comfort to know he's on land these blowy nights."

Phillis said nothing. She kept her head bent down over her work; but I don't think she put a stitch in, while I was reading the letter. I wondered if she understood what nosegay was meant; but I could not tell. When next she lifted up her face, there were two spots of brilliant colour on the cheeks that had been so pale before. After I had spent an hour or two there, I was bound to return back to Hornby. I told them I did not know when I could come again, as we—by which I mean the company—had undertaken the Hensleydale line; that branch for which poor Holdsworth was surveying when he caught his fever.

"But you'll have a holiday at Christmas," said my cousin. "Surely they'll not be such heathens as to work you then?"

"*Perhaps the lad will* be going home," said the

minister, as if to mitigate his wife's urgency; but for all that, I believe he wanted me to come. Phillis fixed her eyes on me with a wistful expression, hard to resist. But, indeed, I had no thought of resisting. Under my new master I had no hope of a holiday long enough to enable me to go to Birmingham and see my parents with any comfort; and nothing could be pleasanter to me than to find myself at home at my cousin's for a day or two, then. So it was fixed that we were to meet in Hornby Chapel on Christmas Day, and that I was to accompany them home after service, and if possible to stay over the next day.

I was not able to get to chapel till late on the appointed day, and so I took a seat near the door in considerable shame, although it really was not my fault. When the service was ended, I went and stood in the porch to await the coming out of my cousins. Some worthy people belonging to the congregation clustered into a group just where I stood, and exchanged the good wishes of the season. It had just begun to snow, and this occasioned a little delay, and they fell into further conversation. I was not attending to what was not meant for me to hear, till I caught the name of Phillis Holman. And then I listened; where was the harm?

"I never saw any one so changed!"

"I asked Mrs. Holman," quoth another, "'Is Phillis well?' and she just said she had been having a cold which had pulled her down; she did not seem to think anything of it."

"They had best take care of her," said one of the *oldest of the* good ladies; "Phillis comes of a family

as is not long-lived. Her mother's sister, Lydia Green, her own aunt as was, died of a decline just when she was about this lass's age."

This ill-omened talk was broken in upon by the coming out of the minister, his wife and daughter, and the consequent interchange of Christmas compliments. I had had a shock, and felt heavy-hearted and anxious, and hardly up to making the appropriate replies to the kind greetings of my relations. I looked askance at Phillis. She had certainly grown taller and slighter, and was thinner; but there was a flush of colour on her face which deceived me for a time, and made me think she was looking as well as ever. I only saw her paleness after we had returned to the farm, and she had subsided into silence and quiet. Her grey eyes looked hollow and sad; her complexion was of a dead white. But she went about just as usual; at least, just as she had done the last time I was there, and seemed to have no ailment; and I was inclined to think that my cousin was right when she had answered the inquiries of the good-natured gossips, and told them that Phillis was suffering from the consequences of a bad cold, nothing more.

I have said that I was to stay over the next day; a great deal of snow had come down, but not all, they said, though the ground was covered deep with the white fall. The minister was anxiously housing his cattle, and preparing all things for a long continuance of the same kind of weather. The men were chopping wood, sending wheat to the mill to be ground before the road should become impassable for a cart and horse. My cousin *and Phillis had* gone upstairs to the apple

room to cover up the fruit from the frost. I had been out the greater part of the morning, and came in about an hour before dinner. To my surprise, knowing how she had planned to be engaged, I found Phillis sitting at the dresser, resting her head on her two hands and reading, or seeming to read. She did not look up when I came in, but murmured something about her mother having sent her down out of the cold. It flashed across me that she was crying, but I put it down to some little spirt of temper; I might have known better than to suspect the gentle, serene Phillis of crossness, poor girl; I stooped down, and began to stir and build up the fire, which appeared to have been neglected. While my head was down I heard a noise which made me pause and listen—a sob, an unmistakable, irrepressible sob. I started up.

"Phillis!" I cried, going towards her, with my hand out, to take hers for sympathy with her sorrow, whatever it was. But she was too quick for me, she held her hand out of my grasp, for fear of my detaining her; as she quickly passed out of the house, she said,—

"Don't, Paul! I cannot bear it!" and passed me, still sobbing, and went out into the keen, open air.

I stood still and wondered. What could have come to Phillis? The most perfect harmony prevailed in the family, and Phillis especially, good and gentle as she was, was so beloved that if they had found out that her finger ached, it would have cast a shadow over their hearts. Had I done anything to vex her? No: she was crying before I came in. I went to look at her book—one of those unintelligible Italian books. I *could make* neither head nor tail of it. I saw some

pencil-notes on the margin, in Holdsworth's handwriting.

Could that be it? Could that be the cause of her white looks, her weary eyes, her wasted figure, her struggling sobs? This idea came upon me like a flash of lightning on a dark night, making all things so clear we cannot forget them afterwards when the gloomy obscurity returns. I was still standing with the book in my hand when I heard cousin Holman's footsteps on the stairs, and as I did not wish to speak to her just then, I followed Phillis's example, and rushed out of the house. The snow was lying on the ground; I could track her feet by the marks they had made; I could see where Rover had joined her. I followed on till I came to a great stack of wood in the orchard—it was built up against the back wall of the outbuildings,—and I recollected then how Phillis had told me, that first day when we strolled about together, that underneath this stack had been her hermitage, her sanctuary, when she was a child; how she used to bring her book to study there, or her work, when she was not wanted in the house; and she had now evidently gone back to this quiet retreat of her childhood, forgetful of the clue given me by her foot-marks on the new-fallen snow. The stack was built up very high; but through the interstices of the sticks I could see her figure, although I did not all at once perceive how I could get to her. She was sitting on a log of wood, Rover by her. She had laid her cheek on Rover's head, and had her arm round his neck, partly for a pillow, partly from an instinctive craving for warmth on that bitter cold day. She was making a low moan, *like an animal in pain*, or perhaps more like the sobbing

of the wind. Rover, highly flattered by her caress, and also, perhaps, touched by sympathy, was flapping his heavy tail against the ground, but not otherwise moving a hair, until he heard my approach with his quick erected ears. Then, with a short, abrupt bark of distrust, he sprang up as if to leave his mistress. Both he and I were immovably still for a moment. I was not sure if what I longed to do was wise: and yet I could not bear to see the sweet serenity of my dear cousin's life so disturbed by a suffering which I thought I could assuage. But Rover's ears were sharper than my breathing was noiseless: he heard me, and sprang out from under Phillis's restraining hand.

"Oh, Rover, don't you leave me, too," she plained out.

"Phillis!" said I, seeing by Rover's exit that the entrance to where she sat was to be found on the other side of the stack. "Phillis, come out! You have got a cold already; and it is not fit for you to sit there on such a day as this. You know how displeased and anxious it would make them all."

She sighed, but obeyed; stooping a little, she came out, and stood upright, opposite to me in the lonely, leafless orchard. Her face looked so meek and so sad that I felt as if I ought to beg her pardon for my necessarily authoritative words.

"Sometimes I feel the house so close," she said; "and I used to sit under the wood-stack when I was a child. It was very kind of you, but there was no need to come after me. I don't catch cold easily."

"Come with me into this cow-house, Phillis. I have got something to say to you; and I can't stand this cold, *if you can.*"

I think she would have fain run away again; but her fit of energy was all spent. She followed me unwillingly enough—that I could see. The place to which I took her was full of the fragrant breath of the cows, and was a little warmer than the outer air. I put her inside, and stood myself in the doorway, thinking how I could best begin. At last I plunged into it.

"I must see that you don't get cold for more reasons than one; if you are ill, Holdsworth will be so anxious and miserable out there" (by which I meant Canada)—

She shot one penetrating look at me, and then turned her face away with a slightly impatient movement. If she could have run away then she would, but I held the means of exit in my own power. "In for a penny in for a pound," thought I, and I went on rapidly, anyhow.

"He talked so much about you, just before he left—that night after he had been here, you know—and you had given him those flowers." She put her hands up to hide her face, but she was listening now—listening with all her ears.

"He had never spoken much about you before, but the sudden going away unlocked his heart, and he told me how he loved you, and how he hoped on his return that you might be his wife."

"Don't," said she, almost gasping out the word, which she had tried once or twice before to speak; but her voice had been choked. Now she put her hand backwards; she had quite turned away from me, and felt for mine. She gave it a soft lingering pressure; and then she put her arms down on the wooden division, and laid her head on it, and cried quiet tears. I did not understand *her at once,* and feared lest I had mistaken

the whole case, and only annoyed her. I went up to her. "Oh, Phillis! I am so sorry—I thought you would, perhaps, have cared to hear it; he did talk so feelingly, as if he did love you so much, and somehow I thought it would give you pleasure."

She lifted up her head and looked at me. Such a look! Her eyes, glittering with tears as they were, expressed an almost heavenly happiness; her tender mouth was curved with rapture—her colour vivid and blushing; but as if she was afraid her face expressed too much, more than the thankfulness to me she was essaying to speak, she hid it again almost immediately. So it was all right then, and my conjecture was well-founded! I tried to remember something more to tell her of what he had said, but again she stopped me.

"Don't," she said. She still kept her face covered and hidden. In half a minute she added, in a very low voice, "Please, Paul, I think I would rather not hear any more—I don't mean but what I have—but what I am very much obliged—— Only—only, I think I would rather hear the rest from himself when he comes back."

And then she cried a little more, in quite a different way. I did not say any more, I waited for her. By-and-by she turned towards me—not meeting my eyes, however; and putting her hand in mine just as if we were two children, she said,—

"We had best go back now—I don't look as if I had been crying, do I?"

"You look as if you had a bad cold," was all the *answer I* made.

"Oh! but I am—I am quite well, only cold; and a good run will warm me. Come along, Paul."

So we ran, hand in hand, till, just as we were on the threshold of the house, she stopped—

"Paul, please, we won't speak about *that* again."

PART IV.

When I went over on Easter Day I heard the chapel-gossips complimenting cousin Holman on her daughter's blooming looks, quite forgetful of their sinister prophecies three months before. And I looked at Phillis, and did not wonder at their words. I had not seen her since the day after Christmas Day. I had left the Hope Farm only a few hours after I had told her the news which had quickened her heart into renewed life and vigour. The remembrance of our conversation in the cow-house was vividly in my mind as I looked at her when her bright healthy appearance was remarked upon. As her eyes met mine our mutual recollections flashed intelligence from one to the other. She turned away, her colour heightening as she did so. She seemed to be shy of me for the first few hours after our meeting, and I felt rather vexed with her for her conscious avoidance of me after my long absence. I had stepped a little out of my usual line in telling her what I did; not that I had received any charge of secrecy, or given even the slightest promise to Holdsworth that I would not *repeat his words. But I* had an uneasy feeling some-

times when I thought of what I had done in the excitement of seeing Phillis so ill and in so much trouble. I meant to have told Holdsworth when I wrote next to him; but when I had my half-finished letter before me I sate with my pen in my hand hesitating. I had more scruple in revealing what I had found out or guessed at of Phillis's secret than in repeating to her his spoken words. I did not think I had any right to say out to him what I believed—namely, that she loved him dearly, and had felt his absence even to the injury of her health. Yet to explain what I had done in telling her how he had spoken about her that last night, it would be necessary to give my reasons, so I had settled within myself to leave it alone. As she had told me she should like to hear all the details and fuller particulars and more explicit declarations first from him, so he should have the pleasure of extracting the delicious tender secret from her maidenly lips. I would not betray my guesses, my surmises, my all but certain knowledge of the state of her heart. I had received two letters from him after he had settled to his business; they were full of life and energy; but in each there had been a message to the family at the Hope Farm of more than common regard; and a slight but distinct mention of Phillis herself, showing that she stood single and alone in his memory. These letters I had sent on to the minister, for he was sure to care for them, even supposing he had been unacquainted with their writer, because they were so clever and so picturesquely worded that they brought, as it were, a whiff of foreign atmosphere into his circumscribed life. I used to wonder *what* was the trade or business in which the minister

would not have thriven, mentally I mean, if it had so happened that he had been called into that state. He would have made a capital engineer, that I know; and he had a fancy for the sea, like many other land-locked men to whom the great deep is a mystery and a fascination. He read law-books with relish; and, once happening to borrow *De Lolme on the British Constitution* (or some such title), he talked about jurisprudence till he was far beyond my depth. But to return to Holdsworth's letters. When the minister sent them back he also wrote out a list of questions suggested by their perusal, which I was to pass on in my answers to Holdsworth, until I thought of suggesting a direct correspondence between the two. That was the state of things as regarded the absent one when I went to the farm for my Easter visit, and when I found Phillis in that state of shy reserve towards me which I have named before. I thought she was ungrateful; for I was not quite sure if I had done wisely in having told her what I did. I had committed a fault, or a folly, perhaps, and all for her sake; and here was she, less friends with me than she had ever been before. This little estrangement only lasted a few hours. I think that as soon as she felt pretty sure of there being no recurrence, either by word, look, or allusion, to the one subject that was predominant in her mind, she came back to her old sisterly ways with me. She had much to tell me of her own familiar interests; how Rover had been ill, and how anxious they had all of them been, and how, after some little discussion between her father and her, both equally grieved by the sufferings of the old dog, *he had been* "remembered in the household

prayers," and how he had begun to get better only the very next day, and then she would have led me into a conversation on the right ends of prayer, and on special providences, and I know not what; only I "jibbed" like their old cart-horse, and refused to stir a step in that direction. Then we talked about the different broods of chickens, and she showed me the hens that were good mothers, and told me the characters of all the poultry with the utmost good faith; and in all good faith I listened, for I believe there was a great deal of truth in all she said. And then we strolled on into the wood beyond the ash-meadow, and both of us sought for early primroses, and the fresh green crinkled leaves. She was not afraid of being alone with me after the first day. I never saw her so lovely, or so happy. I think she hardly knew why she was so happy all the time. I can see her now, standing under the budding branches of the gray trees, over which a tinge of green seemed to be deepening day after day, her sun-bonnet fallen back on her neck, her hands full of delicate wood-flowers, quite unconscious of my gaze, but intent on sweet mockery of some bird in neighbouring bush or tree. She had the art of warbling, and replying to the notes of different birds, and knew their song, their habits and ways, more accurately than any one else I ever knew. She had often done it at my request the spring before; but this year she really gurgled, and whistled, and warbled just as they did, out of the very fulness and joy of her heart. She was more than ever the very apple of her father's eye; her mother gave her both her own share of love, and that of the dead child who *had died in* infancy. I have heard cousin Holman

murmur, after a long dreamy look at Phillis, and tell herself how like she was growing to Johnnie, and soothe herself with plaintive inarticulate sounds, and many gentle shakes of the head, for the aching sense of loss she would never get over in this world. The old servants about the place had the dumb loyal attachment to the child of the land, common to most agricultural labourers; not often stirred into activity or expression. My cousin Phillis was like a rose that had come to full bloom on the sunny side of a lonely house, sheltered from storms. I have read in some book of poetry—

> A maid whom there were none to praise,
> And very few to love.

And somehow those lines always reminded me of Phillis; yet they were not true of her either. I never heard her praised; and out of her own household there were very few to love her; but though no one spoke out their approbation, she always did right in her parents' eyes, out of her natural simple goodness and wisdom. Holdsworth's name was never mentioned between us when we were alone; but I had sent on his letters to the minister, as I have said; and more than once he began to talk about our absent friend, when he was smoking his pipe after the day's work was done. Then Phillis hung her head a little over her work, and listened in silence.

"I miss him more than I thought for; no offence to you, Paul. I said once his company was like dram-drinking; that was before I knew him; and perhaps I spoke in a spirit of judgment. To some men's minds everything presents itself strongly, and they speak accordingly; *and so did* he. And I thought in my vanity

of censorship that his were not true and sober words; they would not have been if I had used them, but they were so to a man of his class of perceptions. I thought of the measure with which I had been meting to him when Brother Robinson was here last Thursday, and told me that a poor little quotation I was making from the *Georgics* savoured of vain babbling and profane heathenism. He went so far as to say that by learning other languages than our own, we were flying in the face of the Lord's purpose when He had said, at the building of the Tower of Babel, that he would confound their languages so that they should not understand each other's speech. As Brother Robinson was to me, so was I to the quick wits, bright senses, and ready words of Holdsworth."

The first little cloud upon my peace came in the shape of a letter from Canada, in which there were two or three sentences that troubled me more than they ought to have done, to judge merely from the words employed. It was this :—"I should feel dreary enough in this out-of-the-way place if it were not for a friendship I have formed with a French Canadian of the name of Ventadour. He and his family are a great resource to me in the long evenings. I never heard such delicious vocal music as the voices of these Ventadour boys and girls in their part songs; and the foreign element retained in their characters and manner of living reminds me of some of the happiest days of my life. Lucille, the second daughter, is curiously like Phillis Holman." In vain I said to myself that it was probably this likeness that made him take pleasure in the society of the *Ventadour* family. In vain I told my anxious fancy that

nothing could be more natural than this intimacy, and that there was no sign of its leading to any consequence that ought to disturb me. I had a presentiment, and I was disturbed; and I could not reason it away. I dare say my presentiment was rendered more persistent and keen by the doubts which would force themselves into my mind, as to whether I had done well in repeating Holdsworth's words to Phillis. Her state of vivid happiness this summer was markedly different to the peaceful serenity of former days. If in my thoughtfulness at noticing this I caught her eye, she blushed and sparkled all over, guessing that I was remembering our joint secret. Her eyes fell before mine, as if she could hardly bear me to see the revelation of their bright glances. And yet I considered again, and comforted myself by the reflection that, if this change had been anything more than my silly fancy, her father or her mother would have perceived it. But they went on in tranquil unconsciousness and undisturbed peace.

A change in my own life was quickly approaching. In the July of this year my occupation on the —— railway and its branches came to an end. The lines were completed, and I was to leave ——shire, to return to Birmingham, where there was a niche already provided for me in my father's prosperous business. But before I left the north it was an understood thing amongst us all that I was to go and pay a visit of some weeks at the Hope Farm. My father was as much pleased at this plan as I was; and the dear family of cousins often spoke of things to be done, and sights to be shown me, during this visit. My want of wisdom in having told "**that thing**" *(under such* ambiguous words I concealed

the injudicious confidence I had made to Phillis) was the only drawback to my anticipations of pleasure.

The ways of life were too simple at the Hope Farm for my coming to them to make the slightest disturbance. I knew my room, like a son of the house. I knew the regular course of their days, and that I was expected to fall into it, like one of the family. Deep summer peace brooded over the place; the warm golden air was filled with the murmur of insects near at hand, the more distant sound of voices out in the fields, the clear far-away rumble of carts over the stone-paved lanes miles away. The heat was too great for the birds to be singing; only now and then one might hear the wood-pigeons in the trees beyond the ash-field. The cattle stood knee-deep in the pond, flicking their tails about to keep off the flies. The minister stood in the hay-field, without hat or cravat, coat or waistcoat, panting and smiling. Phillis had been leading the row of farm-servants, turning the swathes of fragrant hay with measured movement. She went to the end—to the hedge, and then, throwing down her rake, she came to me with her free sisterly welcome. "Go, Paul!" said the minister. "We need all hands to make use of the sunshine to-day. 'Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might.' It will be a healthy change of work for thee, lad; and I find my best rest in change of work." So off I went, a willing labourer, following Phillis's lead; it was the primitive distinction of rank; the boy who frightened the sparrows off the fruit was the last in our rear. We did not leave off till the red sun was gone down behind the fir-trees bordering the common. Then we went home to supper

—prayers—to bed; some bird singing far into the night, as I heard it through my open window, and the poultry beginning their clatter and cackle in the earliest morning. I had carried what luggage I immediately needed with me from my lodgings, and the rest was to be sent by the carrier. He brought it to the farm betimes that morning, and along with it he brought a letter or two that had arrived since I had left. I was talking to cousin Holman—about my mother's ways of making bread, I remember; cousin Holman was questioning me, and had got me far beyond my depth—in the house-place, when the letters were brought in by one of the men, and I had to pay the carrier for his trouble before I could look at them. A bill—a Canadian letter! What instinct made me so thankful that I was alone with my dear unobservant cousin? What made me hurry them away into my coat-pocket? I do not know. I felt strange and sick, and made irrelevant answers, I am afraid. Then I went to my room, ostensibly to carry up my boxes. I sate on the side of my bed and opened my letter from Holdsworth. It seemed to me as if I had read its contents before, and knew exactly what he had got to say. I knew he was going to be married to Lucille Ventadour; nay, that he *was* married; for this was the 5th of July, and he wrote word that his marriage was fixed to take place on the 29th of June. I knew all the reasons he gave, all the raptures he went into. I held the letter loosely in my hands, and looked into vacancy, yet I saw a chaffinch's nest on the lichen-covered trunk of an old apple-tree opposite my window, and saw the mother-bird come fluttering in to feed her *brood,—and* yet I did not see it, although it

seemed to me afterwards as if I could have drawn every fibre, every feather. I was stirred up to action by the merry sound of voices and the clamp of rustic feet coming home for the mid-day meal. I knew I must go down to dinner; I knew, too, I must tell Phillis; for in his happy egotism, his new-fangled foppery, Holdsworth had put in a P.S., saying that he should send wedding-cards to me and some other Hornby and Eltham acquaintances, and "to his kind friends at Hope Farm." Phillis had faded away to one among several "kind friends." I don't know how I got through dinner that day. I remember forcing myself to eat, and talking hard; but I also recollect the wondering look in the minister's eyes. He was not one to think evil without cause; but many a one would have taken me for drunk. As soon as I decently could I left the table, saying I would go out for a walk. At first I must have tried to stun reflection by rapid walking, for I had lost myself on the high moorlands far beyond the familiar gorse-covered common, before I was obliged for very weariness to slacken my pace. I kept wishing—oh! how fervently wishing I had never committed that blunder; that the one little half-hour's indiscretion could be blotted out. Alternating with this was anger against Holdsworth; unjust enough, I dare say. I suppose I stayed in that solitary place for a good hour or more, and then I turned homewards, resolving to get over the telling Phillis at the first opportunity, but shrinking from the fulfilment of my resolution so much that when I came into the house and saw Phillis (doors and windows open wide in the sultry weather) alone in *the kitchen*, I became quite sick with apprehension.

She was standing by the dresser, cutting up a great household loaf into hunches of bread for the hungry labourers who might come in any minute, for the heavy thunder-clouds were overspreading the sky. She looked round as she heard my step.

"You should have been in the field, helping with the hay," said she, in her calm, pleasant voice. I had heard her as I came near the house softly chanting some hymn-tune, and the peacefulness of that seemed to be brooding over her now.

"Perhaps I should. It looks as if it was going to rain."

"Yes; there is thunder about. Mother has had to go to bed with one of her bad headaches. Now you are come in ——"

"Phillis," said I, rushing at my subject and interrupting her, "I went a long walk to think over a letter I had this morning—a letter from Canada. You don't know how it has grieved me." I held it out to her as I spoke. Her colour changed a little, but it was more the reflection of my face, I think, than because she formed any definite idea from my words. Still she did not take the letter. I had to bid her read it, before she quite understood what I wished. She sate down rather suddenly as she received it into her hands; and, spreading it on the dresser before her, she rested her forehead on the palms of her hands, her arms supported on the table, her figure a little averted, and her countenance thus shaded. I looked out of the open window; my heart was very heavy. How peaceful it all seemed in the farmyard! Peace and plenty. How *still and deep was the* silence of the house! Tick-tic

went the unseen clock on the wide staircase. I had heard the rustle once, when she turned over the page of thin paper. She must have read to the end. Yet she did not move, or say a word, or even sigh. I kept on looking out of the window, my hands in my pockets. I wonder how long that time really was? It seemed to me interminable—unbearable. At length I looked round at her. She must have felt my look, for she changed her attitude with a quick sharp movement, and caught my eyes.

"Don't look so sorry, Paul," she said. "Don't, please. I can't bear it. There is nothing to be sorry for. I think not, at least. You have not done wrong, at any rate." I felt that I groaned, but I don't think she heard me. "And he,—there's no wrong in his marrying, is there? I'm sure I hope he'll be happy. Oh! how I hope it!" These last words were like a wail; but I believe she was afraid of breaking down, for she changed the key in which she spoke, and hurried on. "Lucille—that's our English Lucy, I suppose? Lucille Holdsworth! It's a pretty name; and I hope—— I forget what I was going to say. Oh! it was this. Paul, I think we need never speak about this again; only remember you are not to be sorry. You have not done wrong; you have been very, *very* kind; and if I see you looking grieved I don't know what I might do; —I might break down, you know."

I think she was on the point of doing so then, but the dark storm came dashing down, and the thunder-cloud broke right above the house, as it seemed. Her mother, roused from sleep, called out for Phillis; the men and *women from* the hayfield came running into shelter,

drenched through. The minister followed, smiling, and not unpleasantly excited by the war of elements; for, by dint of hard work through the long summer's day, the greater part of the hay was safely housed in the barn in the field. Once or twice in the succeeding bustle I came across Phillis, always busy, and, as it seemed to me, always doing the right thing. When I was alone in my own room at night I allowed myself to feel relieved; and to believe that the worst was over, and was not so very bad after all. But the succeeding days were very miserable. Sometimes I thought it must be my fancy that falsely represented Phillis to me as strangely changed, for surely, if this idea of mine was well-founded, her parents—her father and mother—her own flesh and blood—would have been the first to perceive it. Yet they went on in their household peace and content; if anything, a little more cheerfully than usual, for the "harvest of the first-fruits," as the minister called it, had been more bounteous than usual, and there was plenty all around in which the humblest labourer was made to share. After the one thunderstorm, came one or two lovely serene summer days, during which the hay was all carried; and then succeeded long soft rains filling the ears of corn, and causing the mown grass to spring afresh. The minister allowed himself a few more hours of relaxation and home enjoyment than usual during this wet spell: hard earth-bound frost was his winter holiday; these wet days, after the hay harvest, his summer holiday. We sate with open windows, the fragrance and the freshness called out by the soft-falling rain filling the house-place; while the quiet *ceaseless patter among* the leaves outside ought to have

had the same lulling effect as all other gentle perpetual sounds, such as mill-wheels and bubbling springs, have on the nerves of happy people. But two of us were not happy. I was sure enough of myself, for one. I was worse than sure,—I was wretchedly anxious about Phillis. Ever since that day of the thunderstorm there had been a new, sharp, discordant sound to me in her voice, a sort of jangle in her tone; and her restless eyes had no quietness in them; and her colour came and went without a cause that I could find out. The minister, happy in ignorance of what most concerned him, brought out his books; his learned volumes and classics. Whether he read and talked to Phillis, or to me, I do not know; but feeling by instinct that she was not, could not be, attending to the peaceful details, so strange and foreign to the turmoil in her heart, I forced myself to listen, and if possible to understand.

"Look here!" said the minister, tapping the old vellum-bound book he held; "in the first *Georgic* he speaks of rolling and irrigation; a little further on he insists on choice of the best seed, and advises us to keep the drains clear. Again, no Scotch farmer could give shrewder advice than to cut light meadows while the dew is on, even though it involve night-work. It is all living truth in these days." He began beating time with a ruler upon his knee, to some Latin lines he read aloud just then. I suppose the monotonous chant irritated Phillis to some irregular energy, for I remember the quick knotting and breaking of the thread with which she was sewing. I never hear that snap repeated now, without suspecting some sting or stab troubling the heart of the worker. Cousin Holman, at her peaceful

knitting, noticed the reason why Phillis had so constantly to interrupt the progress of her seam.

"It is bad thread, I'm afraid," she said, in a gentle sympathetic voice. But it was too much for Phillis.

"The thread is bad—everything is bad—I am so tired of it all!" And she put down her work, and hastily left the room. I do not suppose that in all her life Phillis had ever shown so much temper before. In many a family the tone, the manner, would not have been noticed; but here it fell with a sharp surprise upon the sweet, calm atmosphere of home. The minister put down ruler and book, and pushed his spectacles up to his forehead. The mother looked distressed for a moment, and then smoothed her features and said in an explanatory tone,—"It's the weather, I think. Some people feel it different to others. It always brings on a headache with me." She got up to follow her daughter, but half-way to the door she thought better of it, and came back to her seat. Good mother! she hoped the better to conceal the unusual spirt of temper, by pretending not to take much notice of it. "Go on, minister," she said; "it is very interesting what you are reading about, and when I don't quite understand it, I like the sound of your voice." So he went on, but languidly and irregularly, and beat no more time with his ruler to any Latin lines. When the dusk came on, early that July night because of the cloudy sky, Phillis came softly back, making as though nothing had happened. She took up her work, but it was too dark to do many stitches; and she dropped it soon. Then I saw how her hand stole into her mother's, and how this latter fondled it *with quiet little* caresses, while the minister,

as fully aware as I was of this tender pantomime, went on talking in a happier tone of voice about things as uninteresting to him, at the time, I very believe, as they were to me; and that is saying a good deal, and shows how much more real what was passing before him was, even to a farmer, than the agricultural customs of the ancients.

I remember one thing more,—an attack which Betty the servant made upon me one day as I came in through the kitchen where she was churning, and stopped to ask her for a drink of buttermilk.

"I say, cousin Paul," (she had adopted the family habit of addressing me generally as cousin Paul, and always speaking of me in that form,) "something 's amiss with our Phillis, and I reckon you've a good guess what it is. She's not one to take up wi' such as you," (not complimentary, but that Betty never was, even to those for whom she felt the highest respect,) "but I'd as lief yon Holdsworth had never come near us. So there you've a bit o' my mind."

And a very unsatisfactory bit it was. I did not know what to answer to the glimpse at the real state of the case implied in the shrewd woman's speech; so I tried to put her off by assuming surprise at her first assertion.

"Amiss with Phillis! I should like to know why you think anything is wrong with her. She looks as blooming as any one can do."

"Poor lad! you're but a big child after all; and you've likely never heared of a fever-flush. But you know better nor that, my fine fellow! so don't think for to put me off wi' blooms and blossoms and such-like *talk*. *What* makes her walk about for hours and hours

o' nights when she used to be abed and asleep? I sleep next room to her, and hear her plain as can be. What makes her come in panting and ready to drop into that chair,"—nodding to one close to the door,—" and it's 'Oh! Betty, some water, please?' That's the way she comes in now, when she used to come back as fresh and bright as she went out. If yon friend o' yours has played her false, he's a deal for t' answer for; she's a lass who's as sweet and as sound as a nut, and the very apple of her father's eye, and of her mother' too, only wi' her she ranks second to th' minister. You'll have to look after yon chap, for I, for one, will stand no wrong to our Phillis."

What was I to do, or to say? I wanted to justify Holdsworth, to keep Phillis's secret, and to pacify the woman all in the same breath. I did not take the best course, I'm afraid.

"I don't believe Holdsworth ever spoke a word of—of love to her in all his life. I'm sure he didn't."

"Ay, ay! but there's eyes, and there's hands, as well as tongues; and a man has two o' th' one and but one o' t'other."

"And she's so young; do you suppose her parents would not have seen it?"

"Well! if you axe me that, I'll say out boldly, 'No.' They've called her 'the child' so long—'the child' is always their name for her when they talk on her between themselves, as if never anybody else had a ewe-lamb before them—that she's grown up to be a woman under their very eyes, and they look on her still as if she were in her long clothes. And you ne'er heard on a man *falling in love* wi' a babby in long clothes!"

"No!" said I, half laughing. But she went on as grave as a judge.

"Ay! you see you'll laugh at the bare thought on it —and I'll be bound th' minister, though he's not a laughing man, would ha' sniggled at th' notion of falling in love wi' the child. Where's Holdsworth off to?"

"Canada," said I, shortly.

"Canada here, Canada there," she replied testily. "Tell me how far he's off, instead of giving me your gibberish. Is he a two days' journey away? or a three? or a week?"

"He's ever so far off—three weeks at the least," cried I in despair. "And he's either married, or just going to be. So there!" I expected a fresh burst of anger. But no; the matter was too serious. Betty sate down, and kept silence for a minute or two. She looked so miserable and downcast, that I could not help going on, and taking her a little into my confidence.

"It is quite true what I said. I know he never spoke a word to her. I think he liked her, but it's all over now. The best thing we can do—the best and kindest for her—and I know you love her, Betty——"

"I nursed her in my arms; I gave her little brother his last taste o' earthly food," said Betty, putting her apron up to her eyes.

"Well! don't let us show her we guess that she is grieving; she'll get over it the sooner. Her father and mother don't even guess at it, and we must make as if we didn't. It's too late now to do anything else."

"I'll never let on; I know nought. I've known true love mysel', in my day. But I wish he'd been farred *before he* ever came near this house, with his 'Please

Betty' this, and 'Please Betty' that, and drinking up our new milk as if he'd been a cat. I hate such beguiling ways."

I thought it was as well to let her exhaust herself in abusing the absent Holdsworth; if it was shabby and treacherous in me, I came in for my punishment directly.

"It's a caution to a man how he goes about beguiling. Some men do it as easy and innocent as cooing doves. Don't you be none of 'em, my lad. Not that you've got the gifts to do it, either; you're no great shakes to look at, neither for figure, nor yet for face, and it would need be a deaf adder to be taken in wi' your words, though there may be no great harm in 'em." A lad of nineteen or twenty is not flattered by such an out-spoken opinion even from the oldest and ugliest of her sex; and I was only too glad to change the subject by my repeated injunctions to keep Phillis's secret. The end of our conversation was this speech of hers:—

"You great gaupus, for all you're called cousin o' th' minister—many a one is cursed wi' fools for cousins—d'ye think I can't see sense except through your spectacles? I give you leave to cut out my tongue, and nail it up on th' barn-door for a caution to magpies, if I let out on that poor wench, either to herself, or any one that is hers, as the Bible says. Now you've heard me speak Scripture language, perhaps you'll be content, and leave me my kitchen to myself."

During all these days, from the 5th of July to the 17th, I must have forgotten what Holdsworth had said about sending cards. And yet I think I could not have quite forgotten; but, once having told Phillis about his marriage, *I must have looked* upon the after consequence

of cards as of no importance. At any rate they came upon me as a surprise at last. The penny-post reform, as people call it, had come into operation a short time before; but the never-ending stream of notes and letters which seem now to flow in upon most households had not yet begun its course; at least in those remote parts. There was a post-office at Hornby; and an old fellow, who stowed away the few letters in any or all his pockets, as it best suited him, was the letter-carrier to Heathbridge and the neighbourhood. I have often met him in the lanes thereabouts, and asked him for letters. Sometimes I have come upon him, sitting on the hedge-bank resting; and he has begged me to read him an address, too illegible for his spectacled eyes to decipher. When I used to inquire if he had anything for me, or for Holdsworth (he was not particular to whom he gave up the letters, so that he got rid of them somehow, and could set off homewards), he would say he thought that he had, for such was his invariable safe form of answer; and would fumble in breast-pockets, waistcoat-pockets, breeches-pockets, and, as a last resource, in coat-tail pockets; and at length try to comfort me, if I looked disappointed, by telling me, "Hoo had missed this toime, but was sure to write to-morrow;" "Hoo" representing an imaginary sweetheart.

Sometimes I had seen the minister bring home a letter which he had found lying for him at the little shop that was the post-office at Heathbridge, or from the grander establishment at Hornby. Once or twice Josiah, the carter, remembered that the old letter-carrier had trusted him with an epistle to "Measter," as they *had met in* the lanes. I think it must have been about

ten days after my arrival at the farm, and my talk to Phillis cutting bread-and-butter at the kitchen dresser, before the day on which the minister suddenly spoke at the dinner-table, and said—

"By-the-by, I've got a letter in my pocket. Reach me my coat here, Phillis." The weather was still sultry, and for coolness and ease the minister was sitting in his shirt-sleeves. "I went to Heathbridge about the paper they had sent me, which spoils all the pens—and I called at the post-office, and found a letter for me, unpaid,—and they did not like to trust it to old Zekiel. Ay! here it is! Now we shall hear news of Holdsworth, —I thought I'd keep it till we were all together." My heart seemed to stop beating, and I hung my head over my plate, not daring to look up. What would come of it now? What was Phillis doing? How was she looking? A moment of suspense,—and then he spoke again. "Why! what's this? Here are two visiting tickets with his name on, no writing at all. No! it's not his name on both. Mrs. Holdsworth! The young man has gone and got married." I lifted my head at these words; I could not help looking just for one instant at Phillis. It seemed to me as if she had been keeping watch over my face and ways. Her face was brilliantly flushed; her eyes were dry and glittering; but she did not speak; her lips were set together almost as if she was pinching them tight to prevent words or sounds coming out. Cousin Holman's face expressed surprise and interest.

"Well!" said she, "who'd ha' thought it! He's made quick work of his wooing and wedding. I'm sure I *wish him happy.* Let me see"—counting on her

fingers,—"October, November, December, January, February, March, April, May, June, July,—at least we're at the 28th,—it is nearly ten months after all, and reckon a month each way off——"

"Did you know of this news before?" said the minister, turning sharp round on me, surprised, I suppose, at my silence,—hardly suspicious, as yet.

"I knew—I had heard—something. It is to a French Canadian young lady," I went on, forcing myself to talk. "Her name is Ventadour."

"Lucille Ventadour!" said Phillis, in a sharp voice, out of tune.

"Then you knew too!" exclaimed the minister.

We both spoke at once. I said, "I heard of the probability of——, and told Phillis." She said, "He is married to Lucille Ventadour, of French descent; one of a large family near St. Meurice; am not I right?" I nodded. "Paul told me,—that is all we know, is not it? Did you see the Howsons, father, in Heathbridge?" and she forced herself to talk more than she had done for several days, asking many questions, trying, as I could see, to keep the conversation off the one raw surface, on which to touch was agony. I had less self-command; but I followed her lead. I was not so much absorbed in the conversation but what I could see that the minister was puzzled and uneasy; though he seconded Phillis's efforts to prevent her mother from recurring to the great piece of news, and uttering continual exclamations of wonder and surprise. But with that one exception we were all disturbed out of our natural equanimity, more or less. Every day, every *hour, I was* reproaching myself more and more for my

blundering officiousness. If only I had held my foolish tongue for that one half-hour; if only I had not been in such impatient haste to do something to relieve pain! I could have knocked my stupid head against the wall in my remorse. Yet all I could do now was to second the brave girl in her efforts to conceal her disappointment and keep her maidenly secret. But I thought that dinner would never, never come to an end. I suffered for her, even more than for myself. Until now everything which I had heard spoken in that happy household were simple words of true meaning. If we had aught to say, we said it; and if any one preferred silence, nay if all did so, there would have been no spasmodic, forced efforts to talk for the sake of talking, or to keep off intrusive thoughts or suspicions.

At length we got up from our places, and prepared to disperse; but two or three of us had lost our zest and interest in the daily labour. The minister stood looking out of the window in silence, and when he roused himself to go out to the fields where his labourers were working, it was with a sigh; and he tried to avert his troubled face as he passed us on his way to the door. When he had left us, I caught sight of Phillis's face, as, thinking herself unobserved, her countenance relaxed for a moment or two into sad, woful weariness. She started into briskness again when her mother spoke, and hurried away to do some little errand at her bidding. When we two were alone, cousin Holman recurred to Holdsworth's marriage. She was one of those people who like to view an event from every side of probability, or even possibility; and she had been cut short from indulging *herself in this* way during dinner.

"To think of Mr. Holdsworth's being married! I can't get over it, Paul. Not but what he was a very nice young man! I don't like her name, though; it sounds foreign. Say it again, my dear. I hope she'll know how to take care of him, English fashion. He is not strong, and if she does not see that his things are well aired, I should be afraid of the old cough."

"He always said he was stronger than he had ever been before, after that fever."

"He might think so, but I have my doubts. He was a very pleasant young man, but he did not stand nursing very well. He got tired of being coddled, as he called it. I hope they'll soon come back to England, and then he'll have a chance for his health. I wonder now, if she speaks English; but, to be sure, he can speak foreign tongues like anything, as I've heard the minister say."

And so we went on for some time, till she became drowsy over her knitting, on the sultry summer afternoon; and I stole away for a walk, for I wanted some solitude in which to think over things, and, alas! to blame myself with poignant stabs of remorse.

I lounged lazily as soon as I got to the wood. Here and there the bubbling, brawling brook circled round a great stone, or a root of an old tree, and made a pool; otherwise it coursed brightly over the gravel and stones. I stood by one of these for more than half an hour, or, indeed, longer, throwing bits of wood or pebbles into the water, and wondering what I could do to remedy the present state of things. Of course all my meditation was of no use; and at length the distant sound of the horn employed to tell the men far afield to leave off *work, warned* me that it was six o'clock, and time for

me to go home. Then I caught wafts of the loud-voiced singing of the evening psalm. As I was crossing the ash-field, I saw the minister at some distance talking to a man. I could not hear what they were saying, but I saw an impatient or dissentient (I could not tell which) gesture on the part of the former, who walked quickly away, and was apparently absorbed in his thoughts, for though he passed within twenty yards of me, as both our paths converged towards home, he took no notice of me. He passed the evening in a way which was even worse than dinner-time. The minister was silent, depressed, even irritable. Poor cousin Holman was utterly perplexed by this unusual frame of mind and temper in her husband; she was not well herself, and was suffering from the extreme and sultry heat, which made her less talkative than usual. Phillis, usually so reverently tender to her parents, so soft, so gentle, seemed now to take no notice of the unusual state of things, but talked to me—to any one, on indifferent subjects, regardless of her father's gravity, of her mother's piteous looks of bewilderment. But once my eyes fell upon her hands, concealed under the table, and I could see the passionate, convulsive manner in which she laced and interlaced her fingers perpetually, wringing them together from time to time, wringing till the compressed flesh became perfectly white. What could I do? I talked with her, as I saw she wished; her grey eyes had dark circles round them, and a strange kind of dark light in them; her cheeks were flushed, but her lips were white and wan. I wondered that others did not read these signs as clearly as I did. But perhaps they did; I think, from what came afterwards, *the minister* did.

Poor cousin Holman! she worshipped her husband; and the outward signs of his uneasiness were more patent to her simple heart than were her daughter's. After a while she could bear it no longer. She got up, and, softly laying her hand on his broad stooping shoulder, she said,—

"What is the matter, minister? Has anything gone wrong?"

He started as if from a dream. Phillis hung her head, and caught her breath in terror at the answer she feared. But he, looking round with a sweeping glance, turned his broad, wise face up to his anxious wife, and forced a smile, and took her hand in a reassuring manner.

"I am blaming myself, dear. I have been overcome with anger this afternoon. I scarcely knew what I was doing, but I turned away Timothy Cooper. He has killed the Ribstone pippin at the corner of the orchard; gone and piled the quicklime for the mortar for the new stable wall against the trunk of the tree—stupid fellow! killed the tree outright—and it loaded with apples!"

"And Ribstone pippins are so scarce," said sympathetic cousin Holman.

"Ay! But Timothy is but a half-wit; and he has a wife and children. He had often put me to it sore, with his slothful ways, but I had laid it before the Lord, and striven to bear with him. But I will not stand it any longer, it's past my patience. And he has notice to find another place. Wife, we won't talk more about it." He took her hand gently off his shoulder, touched it with his lips; but relapsed into a silence as profound, if not quite so morose in appearance, as before. I could not *tell why*, but this bit of talk between her father and

mother seemed to take all the factitious spirits out of Phillis. She did not speak now, but looked out of the open casement at the calm large moon, slowly moving through the twilight sky. Once I thought her eyes were filling with tears; but, if so, she shook them off, and arose with alacrity when her mother, tired and dispirited, proposed to go to bed immediately after prayers. We all said good-night in our separate ways to the minister, who still sat at the table with the great Bible open before him, not much looking up at any of our salutations, but returning them kindly. But when I, last of all, was on the point of leaving the room, he said, still scarcely looking up—

"Paul, you will oblige me by staying here a few minutes. I would fain have some talk with you."

I knew what was coming, all in a moment. I carefully shut-to the door, put out my candle, and sat down to my fate. He seemed to find some difficulty in beginning, for, if I had not heard that he wanted to speak to me, I should never have guessed it, he seemed so much absorbed in reading a chapter to the end. Suddenly he lifted his head up and said,—

"It is about that friend of yours, Holdsworth! Paul, have you any reason for thinking he has played tricks upon Phillis?"

I saw that his eyes were blazing with such a fire of anger at the bare idea, that I lost all my presence of mind, and only repeated,—

"Played tricks on Phillis!"

"Ay! you know what I mean: made love to her, courted her, made her think that he loved her, and then gone *away and left her*. Put it as you will, only give

me an answer of some kind or another—a true answer, I mean—and don't repeat my words, Paul."

He was shaking all over as he said this. I did not delay a moment in answering him,—

"I do not believe that Edward Holdsworth ever played tricks on Phillis, ever made love to her; he never, to my knowledge, made her believe that he loved her."

I stopped; I wanted to nerve up my courage for a confession, yet I wished to save the secret of Phillis's love for Holdsworth as much as I could; that secret which she had so striven to keep sacred and safe; and I had need of some reflection before I went on with what I had to say.

He began again before I had quite arranged my manner of speech. It was almost as if to himself,—"She is my only child; my little daughter! She is hardly out of childhood; I have thought to gather her under my wings for years to come; her mother and I would lay down our lives to keep her from harm and grief." Then, raising his voice, and looking at me, he said, "Something has gone wrong with the child; and it seemed to me to date from the time she heard of that marriage. It is hard to think that you may know more of her secret cares and sorrows than I do,—but perhaps you do, Paul, perhaps you do,—only, if it be not a sin, tell me what I can do to make her happy again; tell me."

"It will not do much good, I am afraid," said I, "but I will own how wrong I did; I don't mean wrong in the way of sin, but in the way of judgment. Holdsworth told me just before he went that he loved Phillis, and hoped to make her his wife, and I told her."

There! it was out; all my part in it, at least; and I

set my lips tight together, and waited for the words to come. I did not see his face; I looked straight at the wall opposite; but I heard him once begin to speak, and then turn over the leaves in the book before him. How awfully still that room was! The air outside, how still it was! The open windows let in no rustle of leaves, no twitter or movement of birds—no sound whatever. The clock on the stairs—the minister's hard breathing—was it to go on for ever? Impatient beyond bearing at the deep quiet, I spoke again,—

"I did it for the best, as I thought."

The minister shut the book to hastily, and stood up. Then I saw how angry he was.

"For the best, do you say? It was best, was it, to go and tell a young girl what you never told a word of to her parents, who trusted you like a son of their own?"

He began walking about, up and down the room close under the open windows, churning up his bitter thoughts of me.

"To put such thoughts into the child's head," continued he; "to spoil her peaceful maidenhood with talk about another man's love; and such love, too," he spoke scornfully now—"a love that is ready for any young woman. Oh, the misery in my poor little daughter's face to-day at dinner—the misery, Paul! I thought you were one to be trusted—your father's son too, to go and put such thoughts into the child's mind; you two talking together about that man wishing to marry her."

I could not help remembering the pinafore, the childish garment which Phillis wore so long, as if her parents were unaware of her progress towards woman-

hood. Just in the same way the minister spoke and thought of her now, as a child, whose innocent peace I had spoiled by vain and foolish talk. I knew that the truth was different, though I could hardly have told it now; but, indeed, I never thought of trying to tell; it was far from my mind to add one iota to the sorrow which I had caused. The minister went on walking, occasionally stopping to move things on the table, or articles of furniture, in a sharp, impatient, meaningless way, then he began again,—

"So young, so pure from the world! how could you go and talk to such a child, raising hopes, exciting feelings—all to end thus; and best so, even though I saw her poor piteous face look as it did. I can't forgive you, Paul; it was more than wrong—it was wicked—to go and repeat that man's words."

His back was now to the door, and, in listening to his low angry tones, he did not hear it slowly open, nor did he see Phillis, standing just within the room, until he turned round; then he stood still. She must have been half undressed; but she had covered herself with a dark winter cloak, which fell in long folds to her white, naked, noiseless feet. Her face was strangely pale: her eyes heavy in the black circles round them. She came up to the table very slowly, and leant her hand upon it, saying mournfully,—

"Father, you must not blame Paul. I could not help hearing a great deal of what you were saying. He did tell me, and perhaps it would have been wiser not, dear Paul! But—oh, dear! oh, dear! I am so sick with shame! He told me out of his kind heart, because *he saw—that* I was so very unhappy at his going away."

She hung her head, and leant more heavily than before on her supporting hand.

"I don't understand," said her father; but he was beginning to understand. Phillis did not answer till he asked her again. I could have struck him now for his cruelty; but then I knew all.

"I loved him, father!" she said at length, raising her eyes to the minister's face.

"Had he ever spoken of love to you? Paul says not!"

"Never." She let fall her eyes, and drooped more than ever. I almost thought she would fall.

"I could not have believed it," said he, in a hard voice, yet sighing the moment he had spoken. A dead silence for a moment. "Paul! I was unjust to you. You deserved blame, but not all that I said." Then again a silence. I thought I saw Phillis's white lips moving, but it might be the flickering of the candle-light—a moth had flown in through the open casement, and was fluttering round the flame; I might have saved it, but I did not care to do so, my heart was too full of other things. At any rate, no sound was heard for long endless minutes. Then he said,—"Phillis! did we not make you happy here? Have we not loved you enough?"

She did not seem to understand the drift of this question; she looked up as if bewildered, and her beautiful eyes dilated with a painful, tortured expression. He went on, without noticing the look on her face; he did not see it, I am sure.

"And yet you would have left us, left your home, left your father and your mother, and gone away with this *stranger, wandering* over the world."

He suffered, too; there were tones of pain in the voice in which he uttered this reproach. Probably the father and daughter were never so far apart in their lives, so unsympathetic. Yet some new terror came over her, and it was to him she turned for help. A shadow came over her face, and she tottered towards her father; falling down, her arms across his knees, and moaning out,—

"Father, my head! my head!" and then she slipped through his quick-enfolding arms, and lay on the ground at his feet.

I shall never forget his sudden look of agony while I live; never! We raised her up; her colour had strangely darkened; she was insensible. I ran through the back-kitchen to the yard pump, and brought back water. The minister had her on his knees, her head against his breast, almost as though she were a sleeping child. He was trying to rise up with his poor precious burden, but the momentary terror had robbed the strong man of his strength, and he sank back in his chair with sobbing breath.

"She is not dead, Paul! is she?" he whispered, hoarse, as I came near him.

I, too, could not speak, but I pointed to the quivering of the muscles round her mouth. Just then cousin Holman, attracted by some unwonted sound, came down. I remember I was surprised at the time at her presence of mind, she seemed to know so much better what to do than the minister, in the midst of the sick affright which blanched her countenance, and made her tremble all over. I think now that it was the recollection of what *had gone before*; the miserable thought that possibly his

words had brought on this attack, whatever it might be, that so unmanned the minister. We carried her upstairs, and while the women were putting her to bed, still unconscious, still slightly convulsed, I slipped out, and saddled one of the horses, and rode as fast as the heavy-trotting beast could go, to Hornby, to find the doctor there, and bring him back. He was out, might be detained the whole night. I remember saying, "God help us all!" as I sate on my horse, under the window, through which the apprentice's head had appeared to answer my furious tugs at the night-bell. He was a good-natured fellow. He said,—

"He may be home in half an hour, there's no knowing; but I daresay he will. I'll send him out to the Hope Farm directly he comes in. It's that good-looking young woman, Holman's daughter, that's ill, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"It would be a pity if she was to go. She's an only child, isn't she? I'll get up, and smoke a pipe in the surgery, ready for the governor's coming home. I might go to sleep if I went to bed again."

"Thank you, you're a good fellow!" and I rode back almost as quickly as I came.

It was a brain fever. The doctor said so, when he came in the early summer morning. I believe we had come to know the nature of the illness in the night-watches that had gone before. As to hope of ultimate recovery, or even evil prophecy of the probable end, the cautious doctor would be entrapped into neither. He gave his directions, and promised to come again; so soon, that this one thing showed his opinion of the gravity of the case.

By God's mercy she recovered, but it was a long, weary time first. According to previously made plans, I was to have gone home at the beginning of August. But all such ideas were put aside now, without a word being spoken. I really think that I was necessary in the house, and especially necessary to the minister at this time; my father was the last man in the world, under such circumstances, to expect me home.

I say, I think I was necessary in the house. Every person (I had almost said every creature, for all the dumb beasts seemed to know and love Phillis) about the place went grieving and sad, as though a cloud was over the sun. They did their work, each striving to steer clear of the temptation to eye-service, in fulfilment of the trust reposed in them by the minister. For the day after Phillis had been taken ill, he had called all the men employed on the farm into the empty barn; and there he had entreated their prayers for his only child; and then and there he had told them of his present incapacity for thought about any other thing in this world but his little daughter, lying nigh unto death, and he had asked them to go on with their daily labours as best they could, without his direction. So, as I say, these honest men did their work to the best of their ability, but they slouched along with sad and careful faces, coming one by one in the dim mornings to ask news of the sorrow that overshadowed the house; and receiving Betty's intelligence, always rather darkened by passing through her mind, with slow shakes of the head, and a dull wistfulness of sympathy. But, poor fellows, they were hardly fit to be trusted with hasty messages, and *here my poor* services came in. One time I was to ride

hard to Sir William Bentinck's, and petition for ice out of his ice-house, to put on Phillis's head. Another it was to Eltham I must go, by train, horse, anyhow, and bid the doctor there come for a consultation, for fresh symptoms had appeared, which Mr. Brown, of Hornby, considered unfavourable. Many an hour have I sate on the window-seat, half-way up the stairs, close by the old clock, listening in the hot stillness of the house for the sounds in the sick-room. The minister and I met often, but spoke together seldom. He looked so old—so old! He shared the nursing with his wife; the strength that was needed seemed to be given to them both in that day. They required no one else about their child. Every office about her was sacred to them; even Betty only went into the room for the most necessary purposes. Once I saw Phillis through the open door; her pretty golden hair had been cut off long before; her head was covered with wet cloths, and she was moving it backwards and forwards on the pillow, with weary, never-ending motion, her poor eyes shut, trying in the old accustomed way to croon out a hymn tune, but perpetually breaking it up into moans of pain. Her mother sate by her, tearless, changing the cloths upon her head with patient solicitude. I did not see the minister at first, but there he was in a dark corner, down upon his knees, his hands clasped together in passionate prayer. Then the door shut, and I saw no more.

One day he was wanted; and I had to summon him. Brother Robinson and another minister, hearing of his "trial," had come to see him. I told him this upon the stair-landing *in a* whisper. He was strangely *troubled.*

"They will want me to lay bare my heart. I cannot do it. Paul, stay with me. They mean well; but as for spiritual help at such a time—it is God only, God only, who can give it."

So I went in with him. They were two ministers from the neighbourhood; both older than Ebenezer Holman; but evidently inferior to him in education and worldly position. I thought they looked at me as if I were an intruder, but remembering the minister's words I held my ground, and took up one of poor Phillis's books (of which I could not read a word) to have an ostensible occupation. Presently I was asked to "engage in prayer," and we all knelt down; Brother Robinson "leading," and quoting largely as I remember from the Book of Job. He seemed to take for his text, if texts are ever taken for prayers, "Behold thou hast instructed many; but now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest, it toucheth thee and thou art troubled." When we others rose up, the minister continued for some minutes on his knees. Then he too got up, and stood facing us, for a moment, before we all sate down in conclave. After a pause Robinson began—

"We grieve for you, Brother Holman, for your trouble is great. But we would fain have you remember you are as a light set on a hill; and the congregations are looking at you with watchful eyes. We have been talking as we came along on the two duties required of you in this strait; Brother Hodgson and me. And we have resolved to exhort you on these two points. First, God has given you the opportunity of showing forth an *example of* resignation." Poor Mr. Holman visibly *winced at this* word. I could fancy how he had tossed

aside such brotherly preachings in his happier moments; but now his whole system was unstrung, and "resignation" seemed a term which presupposed that the dreaded misery of losing Phillis was inevitable. But good stupid Mr. Robinson went on. "We hear on all sides that there are scarce any hopes of your child's recovery; and it may be well to bring you to mind of Abraham; and how he was willing to kill his only child when the Lord commanded. Take example by him, Brother Holman. Let us hear you say, 'The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord!'"

There was a pause of expectancy. I verily believe the minister tried to feel it; but he could not. Heart of flesh was too strong. Heart of stone he had not.

"I will say it to my God, when He gives me strength, —when the day comes," he spoke at last.

The other two looked at each other, and shook their heads. I think the reluctance to answer as they wished was not quite unexpected. The minister went on: "There are hopes yet," he said, as if to himself. "God has given me a great heart for hoping, and I will not look forward beyond the hour." Then turning more to them, and speaking louder, he added: "Brethren, God will strengthen me when the time comes, when such resignation as you speak of is needed. Till then I cannot feel it; and what I do not feel I will not express; using words as if they were a charm." He was getting chafed, I could see.

He had rather put them out by these speeches of his; but after a short time and some more shakes of the head, Robinson *began again*,—

"Secondly, we would have you listen to the voice of the rod, and ask yourself for what sins this trial has been laid upon you; whether you may not have been too much given up to your farm and your cattle; whether this world's learning has not puffed you up to vain conceit and neglect of the things of God; whether you have not made an idol of your daughter?"

"I cannot answer—I will not answer!" exclaimed the minister. "My sins I confess to God. But if they were scarlet (and they are so in His sight," he added, humbly), "I hold with Christ that afflictions are not sent by God in wrath as penalties for sin."

"Is that orthodox, Brother Robinson?" asked the third minister, in a deferential tone of inquiry.

Despite the minister's injunction not to leave him, I thought matters were getting so serious that a little homely interruption would be more to the purpose than my continued presence, and I went round to the kitchen to ask for Betty's help.

"'Od rot 'em!" said she; "they're always a-coming at illconvenient times; and they have such hearty appetites, they'll make nothing of what would have served master and you since our poor lass has been ill. I've but a bit of cold beef in th' house; but I'll do some ham and eggs, and that 'll rout 'em from worrying the minister. They're a deal quieter after they've had their victual. Last time as old Robinson came, he was very reprehensible upon master's learning, which he couldn't compass to save his life, so he needn't have been afeard of that temptation, and used words long enough to have knocked a body down; but after me and missus had *given him his* fill of victual, and he'd had some good ale

and a pipe, he spoke just like any other man, and could crack a joke with me."

Their visit was the only break in the long weary days and nights. I do not mean that no other inquiries were made. I believe that all the neighbours hung about the place daily till they could learn from some out-comer how Phillis Holman was. But they knew better than to come up to the house, for the August weather was so hot that every door and window was kept constantly open, and the least sound outside penetrated all through. I am sure the cocks and hens had a sad time of it; for Betty drove them all into an empty barn, and kept them fastened up in the dark for several days, with very little effect as regarded their crowing and clacking. At length came a sleep which was the crisis, and from which she wakened up with a new faint life. Her slumber had lasted many, many hours. We scarcely dared to breathe or move during the time; we had striven to hope so long, that we were sick at heart, and durst not trust in the favourable signs: the even breathing, the moistened skin, the slight return of delicate colour into the pale, wan lips. I recollect stealing out that evening in the dusk, and wandering down the grassy lane, under the shadow of the over-arching elms to the little bridge at the foot of the hill, where the lane to the Hope Farm joined another road to Hornby. On the low parapet of that bridge I found Timothy Cooper, the stupid, half-witted labourer, sitting, idly throwing bits of mortar into the brook below. He just looked up at me as I came near, but gave me no greeting, either by word or gesture. He had generally made some sign of recognition to me, but this time I thought he was *sullen at being dismissed*. Nevertheless I felt as if I

would be a relief to talk a little to some one, and I sate down by him. While I was thinking how to begin, he yawned wearedly.

"You are tired, Tim?" said I.

"Ay," said he. "But I reckon I may go home now."

"Have you been sitting here long?"

"Welly all day long. Leastways sin' seven i' th' morning."

"Why, what in the world have you been doing?"

"Nought."

"Why have you been sitting here, then?"

"T' keep carts off." He was up now, stretching himself, and shaking his lubberly limbs.

"Carts! what carts?"

"Carts as might ha' wakened yon wench! It's Hornby market-day. I reckon yo're no better nor a half-wit yoursel'." He cocked his eye at me as if he were gauging my intellect.

"And have you been sitting here all day to keep the lane quiet?"

"Ay. I've nought else to do. Th' minister has turned me adrift. Have yo' heard how th' lass is faring to-night?"

"They hope she'll waken better for this long sleep. Good-night to you, and God bless you, Timothy," said I.

He scarcely took any notice of my words, as he lumbered across a stile that led to his cottage. Presently I went home to the farm. Phillis had stirred, had spoken two or three faint words. Her mother was with her, dropping nourishment into her scarce conscious mouth. The rest of the household were summoned to evening prayer for the first time for many days. It was a return to the daily habits of happiness and health. But in

these silent days our very lives had been an unspoken prayer. Now we met in the house-place, and looked at each other with strange recognition of the thankfulness on all our faces. We knelt down; we waited for the minister's voice. He did not begin as usual. He could not; he was choking. Presently we heard the strong man's sob. Then old John turned round on his knees, and said—

"Minister, I reckon we have blessed the Lord wi' all our souls, though we've ne'er talked about it; and maybe He'll not need spoken words this night. God bless us all, and keep our Phillis safe from harm! Amen."

Old John's impromptu prayer was all we had that night.

"Our Phillis," as he had called her, grew better day by day from that time. Not quickly; I sometimes grew desponding, and feared that she would never be what she had been before; no more she has, in some ways.

I seized an early opportunity to tell the minister about Timothy Cooper's unsolicited watch on the bridge during the long summer's day.

"God forgive me!" said the minister. "I have been too proud in my own conceit. The first steps I take out of this house shall be to Cooper's cottage."

I need hardly say Timothy was reinstated in his place on the farm; and I have often since admired the patience with which his master tried to teach him how to do the easy work which was henceforward carefully adjusted to his capacity.

Phillis was carried downstairs, and lay for hour after hour quite silent on the great sofa, drawn up under the windows of the house-place. She seemed always the same, gentle, quiet, and sad. Her energy did not return *with her bodily strength*. It was sometimes pitiful to

see her parents' vain endeavours to rouse her to interest. One day the minister brought her a set of blue ribbons, reminding her with a tender smile of a former conversation in which she had owned to a love of such feminine vanities. She spoke gratefully to him, but when he was gone she laid them on one side, and languidly shut her eyes. Another time I saw her mother bring her the Latin and Italian books that she had been so fond of before her illness—or, rather, before Holdsworth had gone away. That was worst of all. She turned her face to the wall, and cried as soon as her mother's back was turned. Betty was laying the cloth for the early dinner. Her sharp eyes saw the state of the case.

"Now, Phillis!" said she, coming up to the sofa; "we ha' done a' we can for you, and th' doctors has done a' they can for you, and I think the Lord has done a' He can for you, and more than you deserve, too, if you don't do something for yourself. If I were you, I'd rise up and snuff the moon, sooner than break your father's and your mother's hearts wi' watching and waiting till it pleases you to fight your own way back to cheerfulness. There, I never favoured long preachings, and I've said my say."

A day or two after Phillis asked me, when we were alone, if I thought my father and mother would allow her to go and stay with them for a couple of months. She blushed a little as she faltered out her wish for change of thought and scene.

"Only for a short time, Paul. Then—we will go back to the peace of the old days. I know we shall; I can, and I will!"

COMPANY MANNERS.

Victor Cousin, the French philosopher, has undertaken a new task within the last few years. Whether as a relaxation from, or a continuation of, his study of metaphysics, I do not know, but he has begun to write the biographies of some of the celebrated French women of the 17th century. In making out his list, he is careful to distinguish between authoresses and "femmes d'esprit," ranking the latter infinitely the higher in every point of view. The first of his series is Jacqueline Pascal, the sister of Blaise, known at Port Royal as the Sister Euphemia—a holy, pure, and sainted woman. The second whom the grave philosopher has chosen as a subject for his biography is that beautiful, splendid sinner of the Fronde, the fair-haired Duchess de Longueville. He draws the pure and perfect outlines of Jacqueline Pascal's character with a severe and correct pencil; he paints the lovely duchess with the fond, admiring exaggeration of a lover. The wits of Paris, in consequence, have written the following epitaph for him: "Here lies Victor Cousin, the great philosopher, in love

with the Duchess de Longueville, who died a century-and-a-half before he was born."

Even the friends of this Duchess, insignificant in themselves, become dear and illustrious to Cousin for her fair sake. It is not long since he contributed an article on Madame de Sablé to the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, which has since been published separately, and which has suggested the thoughts and fancies that I am now going to lay before the patient public. This Madame de Sablé was, in her prime, an habitual guest at the Hôtel Rambouillet, the superb habitation which was the centre of the witty and learned as well as the pompous and pedantic society of Paris, in the days of Louis the Thirteenth. When these gatherings had come to an end after Madame de Rambouillet's death, and before Molière had turned the tradition thereof into exquisite ridicule, there were several attempts to form circles that should preserve some of the stately refinement of the Hôtel Rambouillet. Mademoiselle Scudery had her Saturdays; but, an authoress herself, and collecting around her merely clever people, without regard to birth or breeding, M. Cousin does not hold the idea of her Saturdays in high esteem. Madame de Sablé, a gentlewoman by birth: intelligent enough doubtless from having been an associate of Menage, Voiture, Madame de Sevigné, and others in the grand hotel (whose meetings must have been delightful enough at the time, though that wicked Molière has stepped between us and them, and we can only see them as he chooses us to do): Madame de Sablé, friend of the resplendent fair-haired Duchess de Longueville, had weekly meetings which *M. Cousin ranks* far above the more pretentious Satur-

days of Mademoiselle Scudery. In short, the last page of his memoir of Madame de Sablé—where we matter-of-fact English people are apt to put in praise of the morals and religion of the person whose life we have been writing—is devoted to this acme of praise. Madame de Sablé had all the requisites which enabled her "tenir un salon" with honour to herself and pleasure to her friends.

Apart from this crowning accomplishment, the good French lady seems to have been common-place enough. She was well-born, well-bred, and the company she kept must have made her tolerably intelligent. She was married to a dull husband, and doubtless had her small flirtations after she early became a widow; M. Cousin hints at them, but they were never scandalous or prominently before the public. Past middle life, she took to the process of "making her salvation," and inclined to the Port-Royalists. She was given to liking dainty things to eat, in spite of her Jansenism. She had a female friend that she quarrelled with, off and on, during her life. And (to wind up something like Lady O'Looney, of famous memory,) she knew how "tenir un salon." M. Cousin tells us that she was remarkable in no one thing or quality, and attributes to that single simple fact the success of her life.

Now, since I have read these memoirs of Madame de Sablé, I have thought much and deeply thereupon. At first, I was inclined to laugh at the extreme importance which was attached to this art of "receiving company," —no! that translation will not do—"holding a drawing-room" is even worse, because that implies the state and *reserve of royalty*;—shall we call it the art of "Sablé

ing?" But when I thought of my experience in English society; of the evenings dreaded before they came, and sighed over in recollection, because they were so ineffably dull; I saw that to Sablé well, did require, as M. Cousin implied, the union of many excellent qualities and not-to-be-disputed little graces. I asked some French people if they could give me the recipe, for it seemed most likely to be traditional, if not still extant in their nation. I offer to you their ideas, fragmentary though they be; and then I will tell you some of my own; at last, perhaps, with the addition of yours, oh, most worthy readers! we may discover the lost art of Sabléing.

Said the French lady: "A woman to be successful in Sabléing must be past youth, yet not past the power of attracting. She must do this by her sweet and gracious manners, and quick, ready tact in perceiving those who have not had their share of attention, or leading the conversation away from any subject which may give pain to any one present." "Those rules hold good in England," said I. My friend went on: "She should never be prominent in anything; she should keep silence as long as any one else will talk; but when conversation flags, she should throw herself into the breach with the same spirit with which I notice that the young ladies of the house, where a ball is given, stand quietly by till the dancers are tired, and then spring into the arena to carry on the spirit and the music till the others are ready to begin again."

"But," said the French gentleman, "even at this time, when subjects for conversation are wanted, she *should rather* suggest than enlarge—ask questions rather *than give her own* opinions."

"To be sure," said the lady. "Madame Recamier, whose salons were the most perfect of this century, always withheld her opinions on books, or men, or measures, until all around her had given theirs; then she, as it were, collected and harmonized them, saying a kind thing here, and a gentle thing there, and speaking ever with her own quiet sense, till people the most oppressed learnt to understand each other's point of view, which it is a great thing for opponents to do."

"Then the number of the people whom you receive, is another consideration. I should say not less than twelve, nor more than twenty," continued the gentleman. "The evenings should be appointed—say weekly, —fortnightly at the beginning of January, which is our season. Fix an early hour for opening the room. People are caught then in their freshness, before they become exhausted by other parties."

The lady spoke: "For my part, I prefer catching my friends after they have left the grander balls or receptions. One hears then the remarks, the wit, the reason, and the satire which they had been storing up during their evening of imposed silence or of ceremonious speaking."

"A little good-humoured satire is a very agreeable sauce," replied the gentleman, "but it must be good-humoured, and the listeners must be good-humoured; above all, the conversation must be general, and not the chat, chat, chat up in a corner, by which the English so often distinguish themselves. You do not go into society to exchange secrets with your intimate friends; you go to render yourselves agreeable to every one *present, and to help* all to pass a happy evening."

"Strangers should not be admitted," said the lady, taking up the strain. "They would not start fair with the others; they would be ignorant of the allusions that refer to conversations on the previous evenings; they would not understand the—what shall I call it—slang? I mean those expressions having relation to past occurrences, or by-gone witticisms common to all those who are in the habit of meeting."

"Madame de Duras and Madame Recamier never made advances to any stranger. Their salons were the best that Paris has known in this generation. All who wished to be admitted, had to wait and prove their fitness by being agreeable elsewhere; to earn their diploma, as it were, among the circle of these ladies' acquaintances; and, at last, it was a high favour to be received by them."

"They missed the society of many celebrities by adhering so strictly to this unspoken rule," said the gentleman.

"Bah!" said the lady. "Celebrities! what has one to do with them in society? As celebrities, they are simply bores. Because a man has discovered a planet, it does not follow that he can converse agreeably, even on his own subjects; often people are drained dry by one action or expression of their lives—drained dry for all the purposes of a 'salon.' The writer of books, for instance, cannot afford to talk twenty pages for nothing, so he is either profoundly silent, or else he gives you the mere rinsings of his mind. I am speaking now of him as a mere celebrity, and justifying the wisdom of the ladies we were speaking of, in not seeking after *such people*; indeed, in being rather shy of them.

Some of their friends were the most celebrated people of their day, but they were received in their old capacity of agreeable men; a higher character, by far. Then," said she, turning to me, "I believe that you English spoil the perfection of conversation by having your rooms as brilliantly lighted for an evening the charm of which depends on what one hears, as for an evening when youth and beauty are to display themselves among flowers and festoons, and every kind of pretty ornament. I would never have a room affect people as being dark on their first entrance into it; but there is a kind of moonlight as compared to sunlight, in which people talk more freely and naturally; where shy people will enter upon a conversation without a dread of every change of colour or involuntary movement being seen —just as we are always more confidential over a fire than anywhere else—as women talk most openly in the dimly-lighted bedroom at curling-time."

"Away with your shy people," said the gentleman. "Persons who are self-conscious, thinking of an involuntary redness or paleness, an unbecoming movement of the countenance, more than the subject of which they are talking, should not go into society at all. But, because women are so much more liable to this nervous weakness than men, the preponderance of people in a salon should always be on the side of the men."

I do not think I gained more hints as to the lost art from my French friends. Let us see if my own experience in England can furnish any more ideas.

First, let us take the preparations to be made before our house, our room, or our lodgings, can be made to receive society. Of course I am not meaning the pre-

parations needed for dancing or musical evenings. I am taking those parties which have pleasant conversation and happy social intercourse for their affirmed intention. They may be dinners, suppers, tea—I don't care what they are called, provided their end is defined. If your friends have not dined, and it suits you to give them a dinner, in the name of Lucullus, let them dine; but take care that there shall be something besides the mere food and wine to make their fattening agreeable at the time and pleasant to remember, otherwise you had better pack up for each his portions of the dainty dish, and send it separately, in hot-water trays, so that he can eat comfortably behind a door, like Sancho Panza, and have done with it. And yet I don't see why we should be like ascetics; I fancy there is a grace of preparation, a sort of festive trumpet-call, that is right and proper to distinguish the day on which we receive our friends from common days, unmarked by such white stones. The thought and care we take for them to set before them of our best, may imply some self-denial on our less fortunate days. I have been in houses where all, from the scullion maid upward, worked double-tides gladly, because "Master's friends" were coming; and everything must be nice, and good, and all the rooms must look bright, and clean, and pretty. And, as "a merry heart goes all the way," preparations made in this welcoming, hospitable spirit, never seem to tire any one half so much as where servants instinctively feel that it has been said in the parlour, "We must have so-and-so," or "Oh, dear! we have never had the so-and-so's." Yes, I like a little pomp, and luxury, *and stateliness*, to mark our happy days of receiving

friends as a festival; but I do not think I would throw my power of procuring luxuries solely into the eating and drinking line.

My friends would probably be surprised (some wear caps, and some wigs) if I provided them with garlands of flowers, after the manner of the ancient Greeks; but, put flowers on the table (none of your shams, wax or otherwise; I prefer an honest way-side root of primroses, in a common vase of white ware, to the grandest bunch of stiff-rustling artificial rarities in a silver épergne). A flower or two by the side of each person's plate would not be out of the way, as to expense, and would be a very agreeable pretty piece of mute welcome. Cooks and scullion-maids, acting in the sympathetic spirit I have described, would do their very best, from boiling the potatoes well, to sending in all the dishes in the best possible order. I think I would have every imaginary dinner sent up on the Original Mr. Walker's plan; each dish separately, hot and hot. I have an idea that when I go to live in Utopia (not before next Christmas), I will have a kind of hot-water sideboard, such as I think I have seen in great houses, and that nothing shall appear on the table but what is pleasant to the eye. However simple the food, I would do it, and my friends (and may I not add the Giver?) the respect of presenting it at table as well-cooked, as eatable, as wholesome as my poor means allowed; and to this end, rather than to a variety of dishes, would I direct my care. We have no associations with beef and mutton; geese may remind us of the Capitol; and peacocks of Juno; a pigeon-pie of "the simplicity of Venus' doves," but who *thinks of the* leafy covert which has been her

home in life, when he sees a roasted hare? Now, flowers as an ornament, do lead our thoughts away from their present beauty and fragrance. I am almost sure Madame de Sablé had flowers in her salon, and as she was fond of dainties herself, I can fancy her smooth benevolence of character, taking delight in some personal preparations made in the morning for the anticipated friends of the evening. I can fancy her stewing sweetbreads in a silver saucepan, or dressing salad with her delicate, plump, white hands; not that I ever saw a silver saucepan. I was formerly ignorant enough to think that they were only used in the Sleeping Beauty's kitchen, or in the preparations for the marriage of Riquet-with-the-Tuft; but I have been assured that there are such things, and that they impart a most delicate flavour, or no flavour to the victuals cooked therein; so I assert again, Madame de Sablé cooked sweetbreads for her friends in a silver saucepan; but never to fatigue herself with those previous labours. She knew the true taste of her friends too well; they cared for her firstly, as an element in their agreeable evening—the silver saucepan in which they were all to meet; the oil in which their several ingredients were to be softened of what was harsh or discordant—very secondary would be their interest in her sweetbreads.

> Of sweetbreads they'll get mony an ane,
> Of Sablé ne'er anither.

But part of my care beforehand should go to the homely article of waiting. I should not mind having none at all; a dumb waiter, pepper, salt, bread, and *condiments* within the reach or by the side of all.

Little kindly attentions from one guest to another tend to take off the selfish character of the mere act of eating; and, besides, the guests would (or should) be too well educated, too delicate of tact, to interrupt a burst of wit, or feeling, or eloquence, as a mere footman often does with the perpetual "Sherry, or Madeira?" or with the names of those mysterious entremets that always remind me of a white kid glove that I once ate with Vsechamel sauce, and found very tender and good, under the name of Oreilles de Veau à-la-something, but which experiment I never wish to repeat. There is something graceful and kindly in the little attention by which one guest silently puts by his neighbour all that he may require. I consider it a better opening to ultimate friendship, if my unknown neighbour mutely passes me the salt, or silently understands that I like sugar to my soup, than if he had been introduced by his full name and title, and labelled with the one distinguishing action or book of his life, after the manner of some who are rather show-men than hosts.

But, to return to the subject of waiting. I have always believed that the charm of those little suppers, famous from time immemorial as the delightful P.S. to operas, was that there was no formal waiting, or over-careful arrangement of the table; a certain sweet neglect pervaded all, very compatible with true elegance. The perfection of waiting is named in the story of the White Cat, where, if you remember, the hero prince is waited upon by hands without bodies, as he sits at table with the White Cat, and is served with that delicate fricassee of mice. By hands without bodies, I am very far *from meaning hands* without heads. Some people

prefer female-waiters; foot-women as it were. I have weighed both sides of the subject well in my mind, before sitting down to write this paper, and my verdict goes in favour of men; for, all other things being equal, their superior strength gives them the power of doing things without effort, and consequently with less noise than any woman. The quiet ease and solemn soundless movement of some men-servants is wonderful to watch. Last summer, I was staying in a house served by such list-shod, soft-spoken, velvet-handed domestics. One day, the butler touched a spoon with a fork;—the master of the house looked at him as Jupiter may have looked at Hebe, when she made that clumsy step. "No noise, sir, if you please;" and we, as well as the servant, were hushed into the solemn stillness of the room, and were graced and genteel, if not merry and sociable. Still, bursts and clashes, and clatters at the side-table, do disturb conversation; and I maintain that for avoiding these, men-servants are better than women. Women have to add an effort to the natural exercise of what strength they possess before they can lift heavy things—sirloins of beef, saddles of mutton, and the like; and they cannot calculate the additional force of such an effort, so down comes the dish and the mutton and all, with a sound and a splash that surprises us even more than the Phillis, who is neat-handed only when she has to do with things that require delicacy and lightness of touch, not struggle of arm.

And, now I think of it, Mademoiselle de Sablé must have taken the White Cat for her model; there must evidently have been the same noiseless ease and grace *about the* movements of both; the same purring, happy,

inarticulate moments of satisfaction, when surrounded by pleasant circumstances, must have been uttered by both. My own mouth has watered before now at the account of that fricassee of mice prepared especially for the White Cat; and M. Cousin alludes more than once to Madame de Sablé's love for "friandises." Madame de Sablé avoided the society of literary women, and so I am sure did the White Cat. Both had an instinctive sense of what was comfortable; both loved home with tenacious affection; and yet I am mistaken if each had not their own little private love of adventure—touches of the gipsy.

The reason why I think Madame de Sablé had this touch in her is because she knew how "tenir un salon." You do not see the connection between gipsyism and the art of being a good hostess,—of receiving pleasantly. I do; but I am not sure if I can explain it. In the first place, gipsies must be people of quick impulse and ready wit; entering into fresh ideas, and new modes of life with joyous ardour and energy, and fertile in expedients for extricating themselves from the various difficulties into which their wandering life leads them. They must have a lofty disregard for "convenances," and yet a power of graceful adaptation. They evidently have a vivid sense of the picturesque, and a love of adventure, which, if it does not show itself in action, must show itself in sympathy with other's doings. Now, which of these qualities would be out of place in Madame de Sablé? From what we read of the life of her contemporary, Madame de Sevigné, we see that impromptu expedients were necessary in those times, when the thought of the morning made the pleasure of the evening,

and when people snatched their enjoyments from hand to mouth, as it were, while yet six-weeks-invitations were not. Now, I have noticed that in some parties where we were all precise and sensible, ice-bound under some indefinable stiff restraint, some little domestic contre-temps, if frankly acknowledged by the hostess, has suddenly unloosed tongues and hearts in a supernatural manner;

The upper air bursts into life,

more especially if some unusual expedient had to be resorted to, giving the whole the flavour and zest of a pic-nic. Toasting bread in a drawing-room, coaxing up a half-extinguished fire by dint of brown sugar, news-papers, and pretty good-for-nothing bellows, turning a packing-case upside down for a seat, and covering in with a stray piece of velvet; these are, I am afraid, the only things that can call upon us for unexpected exertion, now that all is arranged and re-arranged for every party a month beforehand. But I have lived in other times and other places, I have been in the very heart and depth of Wales; within three miles of the house of the high sheriff of the county, who was giving a state-dinner on a certain day, to which the gentleman with whom I was staying was invited. He was on the point of leaving his house in his little Norwegian carriole, and we were on the point of sitting down to dinner, when a man rode up in hot haste—a servant from the high sheriff's came to beg for our joint off the spit. Fish, game, poultry—they had all the delicacies of their own land; but the butcher from the nearest market-town had failed them, *and at the last* moment they had to send off a groom

a-begging to their neighbours. My relation departed ignorant of our dinnerless state; but he came back in great delight with his party. After the soup and fish had been removed, there had been a long pause (the joint had got cold on its ride, and had to be re-warmed); a message was brought to the host, who had immediately confided his perplexity to his guests, and put it to the vote whether they would wait for the joint, or have the order of the courses changed, and eat the third before the second. Every one had enjoyed the merry dilemma; the ice was broken, and all went on pleasantly and easily in a party where there was rather a heterogeneous mixture of politics and opinions. Dinner parties in those days and in that part of Wales was somewhat regulated by the arrival of the little sailing vessels, which, having discharged their cargo at Bristol or Liverpool, brought back commissioned purchases for the different families. A chest of oranges for Mr. Williams, or Mr. Wynn, was a sure signal that before many days were over, Mr. Williams or Mr. Wynn would give a dinner party; strike while the iron was hot; eat while the oranges were fresh. A man rode round to all the different houses when any farmer planned such a mighty event as killing a cow, to ask what part each family would take. Visiting acquaintances lived ten or twelve miles from each other, separated by bad and hilly roads; the moon had always to be consulted before issuing invitations; and then the mode of proceeding was usually something like this. The invited friends came to dinner at half-past five or six; these were always those from the greatest distance,—the nearer neighbours came later on in *the evening*. After the gentlemen had left the

dining-room, it was cleared for dancing. The fragments of the dinner, prepared by ready cooks, served for supper; tea was ready some time towards one or two, and the dancers went merrily on till a seven or eight o'clock breakfast, after which they rode or drove home by broad daylight. I was never at one of these meetings, although staying in a house from which many went; I was considered too young; but from what I heard they were really excessively pleasant, sociable gatherings, although not quite entitled to be classed with Madame de Sablé's salons.

To return to the fact that a slightly gipsy and impromptu character, either in the hostess or in the arrangements, or in the amusements, adds a piquancy to the charm: let any one remember the agreeable private teas that go on in many houses about five o'clock. I remember those in one house particularly, as remarkably illustrating what I am trying to prove. These teas were held in a large dismantled school-room, and a superannuated school-room is usually the most doleful chamber imaginable. I never saw this by full daylight, I only know that it was lofty and large, that we went to it through a long gallery library, through which we never passed at any other time, the school-room having been accessible to the children in former days by a private staircase—that great branches of trees swept against the windows with a long plaintive moan, as if tortured by the wind,—that below in the stable-yard two Irish stag-hounds set up their musical bays to mingle with the outlandish Spanish which a parrot in the room continually talked out of the darkness in which its perch was placed,—that the walls of the room seemed to recede as in a dream, and, instead *of them, the* flickering firelight painted tropical forests or

Norwegian fiords, according to the will of our talkers. I know this tea was nominally private to the ladies, but that all the gentlemen strayed in most punctually by accident—that the fire was always in that state when somebody had to poke with the hard blows of despair, and somebody else to fetch in logs of wood from the basket outside, and somebody else to unload his pockets of fir-bobs, which last were always efficacious, and threw beautiful dancing lights far and wide. And then there was a black kettle, long ago too old for kitchen use, that leaked and ran, and sputtered against the blue and sulphur-coloured flames, and did everything that was improper, but the water out of which made the best tea in the world, which we drank out of unmatched cups, the relics of several school-room sets. We ate thick bread and butter in the darkness with a vigour of appetite which had quite disappeared at the well-lighted eight o'clock dinner. Who ate it I don't know, for we stole from our places round the fire-side to the tea-table in comparative darkness in the twilight near the window and helped ourselves, and came back on tiptoe to hear one of the party tell of wild enchanted spicy islands in the Eastern Archipelago, or buried cities in farthest Mexico; he used to look into the fire and draw, and paint with words in a manner perfectly marvellous, and with an art which he had quite lost at the formal dinner-time. Our host was scientific; a name of high repute; he too told us of wonderful discoveries, strange surmises, glimpses into something far away and utterly dream-like. His son had been in Norway fishing; then, when he sat all splashed with hunting, he too could tell of adventures in a natural *racy* way. The girls busy with their heavy

kettle, and with their tea-making, put in a joyous word now and then. At dinner the host talked of nothing more intelligible than French mathematics; the heir drawled out an infinite deal of nothing about the "Shakespeare and musical glasses" of the day; the traveller gave us latitudes and longitudes, and rates of population, exports and imports, with the greatest precision; and the girls were as pretty, helpless, inane fine ladies as you would wish to see.

Speaking of wood fires, reminds me of Madame de Sablé's fires. Of course they were of wood, being in Paris; but I believe that even if she had lived in a coal country, she would have burned wood by instinctive preference, as a lady I once knew, always ordered a lump of cannel coal to be brought up if ever her friends seemed silent and dull. A wood fire has a kind of spiritual, dancing, glancing life about it. It is an elvish companion, crackling, hissing, bubbling: throwing out beautiful jets of vivid many-coloured flame. The best wood-fires I know, are those at Keswick. Making lead pencils is the business of the place; and the cedar chips for scent, and the thinnings of the larch and fir plantations thereabouts for warm and brilliant light, make such a fire as Madame de Sablé would have delighted in.

Depend upon it, too, every seat in her salon was easy and comfortable of its kind. They might not be made of any rare kind of wood, nor covered very magnificently, but the bodies of her friends could rest and repose in them in easy unconstrained attitudes. No one can be agreeable, perched on a chair which does not afford space for proper support. I defy the most accomplished *professional* wit to go on uttering "mots" in a chair

with a stiff, hard, upright back, or with his legs miserably dangling. No! Madame de Sablé's seats were commodious, and probably varied to suit all tastes; nor was there anything in the shape of a large and cumbrous article of furniture placed right in the middle of her room, so as to prevent her visitors from changing their places, or drawing near to each other, or to the fire, if they so willed it. I imagine, likewise, that she had that placid, kindly manner, which would never show any loss of self-possession. I fancy that there was a welcome ready for all, even though some came a little earlier than they were expected.

I was once very much struck by the perfect breeding of an old Welsh herb-woman, with whom I drank tea,—a tea which was not tea after all,—an infusion of balm and black-currant leaves, with a pinch of lime blossom to give it a Pekoe flavour. She had boasted of the delicacy of this beverage to me on the previous day, and I had begged to be allowed to come and drink a cup with her. The only drawback was that she had but one cup, but she immediately bethought her that she had two saucers, one of which would do just as well, indeed, better than any cup. I was anxious to be in time, and so I was too early. She had not done dusting and rubbing when I arrived, but she made no fuss; she was glad to see me, and quietly bade me welcome, though I had come before all was as she could have wished. She gave me a dusted chair, sate down herself, with her kilted petticoats and working apron, and talked to me as if she had not a care or a thought on her mind but the enjoyment of the present time. By-and-by, in moving about the room, she slipped behind the bed-curtain, still

conversing. I heard the splash of water, and a drawer open and shut; and then my hostess emerged spruce, and clean, and graced, but not one whit more agreeable or at her ease than she had been for the previous half hour in her working dress.

There are a set of people who put on their agreeableness with their gowns. Here again I have studied the subject, and the result is, that I find people of this description are more pleasant in society in their second-best than in their very best dresses. These last are new; and the persons I am speaking of never feel thoroughly at home in them, never lose their consciousness of unusual finery until the first stain has been made. With their best gowns they put on an unusual fineness of language; they say "commence" instead of "begin;" they inquire if they may "assist," instead of asking if they may "help" you to anything. And yet there are some, very far from vain or self-conscious, who are never so agreeable as when they have a dim, half-defined idea that they are looking their best—not in finery, but in air, arrangement, or complexion. I have a notion that Madame de Sablé, with her fine instincts, was aware of this, and that there were one or two secrets about the furniture and disposition of light in her salon which are lost in these degenerate days. I heard, or read, lately, that we make a great mistake in furnishing our reception-rooms with all the light and delicate colours, the profusion of ornament, and flecked and spotted chintzes, if we wish to show off the human face and figure; that our ancestors and the great painters knew better, with their somewhat sombre and heavy-*tinted back-grounds*, relieving or throwing out into full

relief the rounded figure and the delicate peach-like complexion.

I fancy Madame de Sablé's salon was furnished with deep warm soberness of tone; lighted up by flowers, and happy animated people, in a brilliancy of dress which would be lost now-a-days against our satin walls, and flower-bestrewn carpets, and gilding, gilding everywhere. Then somehow, conversation must have flowed naturally into sense or nonsense, as the case might be. People must have gone to her house well prepared for either lot. It might be that wit would come uppermost, sparkling, crackling, leaping, calling out echoes all around; or the same people might talk with all their might and wisdom, on some grave and important subject of the day, in that manner which we have got into the way of calling "earnest," but which term has struck me as being slightly flavoured by cant, ever since I heard of an "earnest uncle." At any rate, whether grave or gay, people did not go up to Madame de Sablé's salons with a set purpose of being either the one or the other. They were carried away by the subject of the conversation, by the humour of the moment. I have visited a good deal among a set of people who piqued themselves on being rational. We have talked what they called sense, but what I call platitudes, till I have longed, like Southey in the Doctor, to come out with some interminable nonsensical word (Aballibogibouganorribo was his, I think), as a relief for my despair at not being able to think of anything more that was sensible. It would have done me good to have said it, and I could have started afresh on the rational tack. But I never did. I sank into inane silence, which I hope was taken for wisdom. Or

of this set paid a relation of mine a profound compliment, for so she meant it to be, "Oh, Miss F.! you are so trite!" But as it is not in every one's power to be rational, and "trite," at all times and in all places, discharging our sense at a given place, like water from a fireman's hose; and as some of us are cisterns rather than fountains, and may have our stores exhausted, why is it not more general to call in other aids to conversation, in order to enable us to pass an agreeable evening?

But I will come back to this presently. Only let me say that there is but one thing more tiresome than an evening when everybody tries to be profound and sensible, and that is an evening when everybody tries to be witty. I have a disagreeable sense of effort and unnaturalness at both times; but the everlasting attempt, even when it succeeds, to be clever and amusing, is the worse of the two. People try to say brilliant rather than true things; they not only catch eager hold of the superficial and ridiculous in other persons, and in events generally, but from constantly looking out for subjects for jokes, and "mots," and satire, they become possessed of a kind of sore susceptibility themselves, and are afraid of their own working selves, and dare not give way to any expression of feeling, or any noble indignation or enthusiasm. This kind of wearying wit is far different from humour, which wells up and forces its way out irrepressibly, and calls forth smiles and laughter, but not very far apart from tears. Depend upon it, some of Madame de Sablé's friends had been moved in a most abundant and genial measure. They knew how to nar*rate too.* Very simple, say you? I say, no! I believe

the art of telling a story is born with some people, and these have it to perfection; but all might acquire some expertness in it, and ought to do so, before launching out into the muddled, complex, hesitating, broken, disjointed, poor, bald, accounts of events which have neither unity, nor colour, nor life, nor end in them, that one sometimes hears.

But as to the rational parties that are in truth so irrational, when all talk up to an assumed character, instead of showing themselves what they really are, and so extending each other's knowledge of the infinite and beautiful capacities of human nature—whenever I see the grave sedate faces, with their good but anxious expression, I remember how I was once, long ago, at a party like this; every one had brought out his or her wisdom, and aired it for the good of the company; one or two had from a sense of duty, and without any special living interest in the matter, improved us by telling us of some new scientific discovery, the details of which were all and each of them wrong, as I learnt afterwards; if they had been right, we should not have been any the wiser;—and just at the pitch when any more useful information might have brought on congestion of the brain, a stranger to the town, a beautiful, audacious, but most feminine romp, proposed a game, and such a game, for us wise men of Gotham! But she (now long still and quiet after her bright life, so full of pretty pranks) was a creature whom all who looked on loved; and with grave hesitating astonishment we knelt round a circular table at her word of command. She made one of the circle, and producing a feather out of some sofa pillow, she told us she should blow it up into the

air, and whichever of us it floated near, must puff away to keep it from falling on the table. I suspect we all looked like Keeley in the "Camp at Chobham," and were surprised at our own obedience to this ridiculous, senseless mandate, given with a graceful imperiousness, as if it were too royal to be disputed. We knelt on, puffing away with the utmost intentness, looking like a set of elderly——

"Fools!" No! my dear sir. I was going to say elderly cherubim. But making fools of ourselves, was better than making owls, as we had been doing.

I will mention another party, where a game of some kind would have been a blessing. It was at a very respectable tradesman's house. We went at half-past four, and found a well-warmed handsome sitting-room, with block upon block of unburnt coal behind the fire; on the table there was a tray with wine and cake, oranges and almonds and raisins, of which we were urged to partake. In half-an-hour came tea; none of your flimsy meals, with wafer bread and butter, and three biscuits and a half. This was a grave and serious proceeding; tea, coffee, bread of all kinds, cold fowl, tongue, ham, potted meats—I don't know what. Tea lasted about an hour, and then the cake and wine tray was restored to its former place. The stock of subjects of common interest was getting low, and, in spite of our good-will, long stretches of silence occurred, producing a stillness, which made our host nervously attack the fire, and stir it up to a yet greater glow of intense heat; and the hostess invariably rose at such times, and urged us to "eat another maccaroon." The first I *revelled in*, the second I enjoyed, the third I got

through, the four I sighed over, the fifth reminded me uncomfortably of that part of Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, where he feeds a donkey with maccaroons,—and when, at the sight of the sixth, I rose to come away, a burst of imploring, indignant surprise greeted me: "You are surely never going before supper!" I stopped. I ate that supper. Hot jugged hare, hot roast turkey, hot boiled ham, hot apple-tart, hot toasted cheese. No wonder I am old before my time. Now these good people were really striving, and taking pains, and laying out money, to make the evening pass agreeably, but the only way they could think of to amuse their guests, was, giving them plenty to eat. If they had asked one of their children they could doubtless have suggested half-a-dozen games, which we could all have played at when our subjects of common interest failed, and which would have carried us over the evening quietly and simply, if not brilliantly. But in many a small assemblage of people, where the persons collected are incongruous, where talking cannot go on through so many hours, without becoming flat or laboured, why have we not oftener recourse to games of some kind.

Wit, Advice, Bout-rimés, Lights, Spanish merchant, Twenty Questions—every one knows these, and many more, if they would only not think it beneath them to be called upon by a despairing hostess to play at them. Of course to play them well requires a little more exertion of intellect than quoting other people's sense and wisdom, or misquoting science. But I do not think it takes as much thought and memory, and consideration, as it does to be "up" in the science of good eating and drinking. A profound knowledge of this branch of

learning seems in general to have absorbed all the faculties before it could be brought to anything like perfection. So I do not consider games as entailing so much mental fatigue as a man must undergo before he is qualified to decide upon dishes. I once noticed the worn and anxious look of a famous diner-out, when called upon by his no less anxious host to decide upon the merits of a salad, mixed by no hands, as you may guess, but those of the host in question. The guest, doctor of the art of good living, tasted, paused, tasted again,—and then, with gentle solemnity, gave forth his condemnatory opinion. I happened to be his next neighbour, and slowly turning his meditative full-moon face round to me, he gave me the valuable information that to eat a salad in perfection some one should be racing from lettuce to shalot, from shalot to endive, and so on, all the time that soup and fish were being eaten; that the vegetables should be gathered, washed, sliced, blended, eaten, all in a quarter of an hour. I bowed as in the presence of a master; and felt, no wonder his head was bald, and his face heavily wrinkled.

I have said nothing of books. Yet I am sure that if Madame de Sablé lived now, they would be seen in her salon as part of its natural indispensable furniture; not brought out, and strewed here and there when "company was coming," but as habitual presences in her room, wanting which, she would want a sense of warmth and comfort and companionship. Putting out books as a sort of preparation for an evening, as a means for making it pass agreeably, is running a great *risk*. In the first place, books are by such people, and *on such* occasions, chosen more for their outside than

their inside. And in the next, they are the "mere material with which wisdom (or wit) builds;" and if persons don't know how to use the material, they will suggest nothing. I imagine Madame de Sablé would have the volumes she herself was reading, or those which, being new, contained any matter of present interest, left about, as they would naturally be. I could also fancy that her guests would not feel bound to talk continually, whether they had anything to say or not, but that there might be pauses of not unpleasant silence—a quiet darkness out of which they might be certain that the little stars would glimmer soon. I can believe that in such pauses of repose, some one might open a book, and catching on a suggestive sentence, might dash off again into the full flow of conversation. But I cannot fancy any grand preparations for what was to be said among people, each of whom brought the best dish in bringing himself; and whose own store of living, individual thought and feeling, and mother-wit, would be infinitely better than any cut-and-dry determination to devote the evening to mutual improvement. If people are really good and wise, their goodness and their wisdom flow out unconsciously, and benefit like sunlight. So, books for reference, books for impromptu suggestion, but never books to serve for texts to a lecture. Engravings fall under something like the same rules. To some they say everything; to ignorant and unprepared minds, nothing. I remember noticing this in watching how people looked at a very valuable portfolio belonging to an acquaintance of mine, which contained engraved and authentic portraits *of almost* every possible person, from king

and kaiser down to notorious beggars and criminals; including all the celebrated men, women, and actors whose likenesses could be obtained. To some, this portfolio gave food for observation, meditation and conversation. It brought before them every kind of human tragedy,—every variety of scenery and costume and grouping in the background, thronged with figures called up by their imagination. Others took them up and laid them down, simply saying, "This is a pretty face!" "Oh, what a pair of eyebrows!" "Look at this queer dress!"

Yet, after all, having something to take up and to look at, is a relief and of use to persons who, without being self-conscious, are nervous from not being accustomed to society. Oh, Cassandra! Remember when you with your rich gold coins of thought, with your noble power of choice expression, were set down, and were thankful to be set down, to look at some paltry engravings, just because people did not know how to get at your ore, and you did not care a button whether they did or not, and were rather bored by their attempts, the end of which you never found out. While I, with my rattling tinselly rubbish, was thought "agreeable and an acquisition!" You would have been valued at Madame de Sablé's, where the sympathetic and intellectual stream of conversation would have borne you and your golden fragments away with it, by its soft resistless gentle force.

MR. HARRISON'S CONFESSIONS.

CHAPTER I.

THE fire was burning gaily. My wife had just gone upstairs to put baby to bed. Charles sat opposite to me, looking very brown and handsome. It was pleasant enough that we should feel sure of spending some weeks under the same roof, a thing which we had never done since we were mere boys. I felt too lazy to talk, so I ate walnuts and looked into the fire. But Charles grew restless.

"Now that your wife is gone upstairs, Will, you must tell me what I've wanted to ask you ever since I saw her this morning. Tell me all about the wooing and winning. I want to have the receipt for getting such a spicy little wife of my own. Your letters only gave the barest details. So set to, man, and tell me every particular."

"If I tell you all, it will be a long story."

"Never fear. If I get tired, I can go to sleep, and dream that I am back again, a lonely bachelor, in Ceylon; and I can waken up when you have done, to

know that I am under your roof. Dash away, man! 'Once upon a time, a gallant young bachelor——' There's a beginning for you!"

"Well, then, 'once upon a time, a gallant young bachelor' was sorely puzzled where to settle, when he had completed his education as a surgeon.—I must speak in the first person; I cannot go on as a gallant young bachelor.—I had just finished walking the hospitals when you went to Ceylon, and, if you remember, I wanted to go abroad like you, and thought of offering myself as a ship-surgeon; but I found I should rather lose caste in my profession; so I hesitated, and while I was hesitating, I received a letter from my father's cousin, Mr. Morgan,—that old gentleman who used to write such long letters of good advice to my mother, and who tipped me a five-pound note when I agreed to be bound apprentice to Mr. Howard, instead of going to sea. Well, it seems the old gentleman had all along thought of taking me as his partner, if I turned out pretty well; and as he heard a good account of me from an old friend of his, who was a surgeon at Guy's, he wrote to propose this arrangement: I was to have a third of the profits for five years; after that, half; and eventually I was to succeed to the whole. It was no bad offer for a penniless man like me, as Mr. Morgan had a capital country practice, and, though I did not know him personally, I had formed a pretty good idea of him, as an honourable, kind-hearted, fidgetty, meddlesome old bachelor; and a very correct notion it was, as I found out in the very first half-hour of seeing him. I had had some idea that I was to live *in his house*, as he was a bachelor and a kind of family

friend; and I think he was afraid that I should expect this arrangement, for when I walked up to his door, with the porter carrying my portmanteau, he met me on the steps, and while he held my hand and shook it, he said to the porter, 'Jerry, if you'll wait a moment, Mr. Harrison will be ready to go with you to his lodgings, at Jocelyn's, you know;' and then turning to me, he addressed his first words of welcome. I was a little inclined to think him inhospitable, but I got to understand him better afterwards. 'Jocelyn's,' said he, 'is the best place I have been able to hit upon in a hurry, and there is a good deal of fever about, which made me desirous that you should come this month,—a low kind of typhoid, in the oldest part of the town. I think you'll be comfortable there for a week or two. I have taken the liberty of desiring my housekeeper to send down one or two things which give the place a little more of a home aspect,—an easy chair, a beautiful case of preparations, and one or two little matters in the way of eatables; but if you'll take my advice, I've a plan in my head which we will talk about to-morrow morning. At present, I don't like to keep you standing out on the steps here, so I'll not detain you from your lodgings, where I rather think my housekeeper is gone to get tea ready for you.'

"I thought I understood the old gentleman's anxiety for his own health, which he put upon care for mine, for he had on a kind of loose grey coat, and no hat on his head. But I wondered that he did not ask me in-doors, instead of keeping me on the steps. I believe, after all, I made a mistake in supposing he was afraid of taking cold; he was only afraid of being seen in

dishabille. And for his apparent inhospitality, I had not been long in Duncombe before I understood the comfort of having one's house considered as a castle into which no one might intrude, and saw good reason for the practice Mr. Morgan had established of coming to his door to speak to every one. It was only the effect of habit that made him receive me so. Before long, I had the free run of his house.

"There was every sign of kind attention and forethought on the part of some one, whom I could not doubt to be Mr. Morgan, in my lodgings. I was too lazy to do much that evening, and sat in the little bow-window which projected over Jocelyn's shop, looking up and down the street. Duncombe calls itself a town, but I should call it a village. Really, looking from Jocelyn's, it is a very picturesque place. The houses are anything but regular; they may be mean in their details; but altogether they look well; they have not that flat unrelieved front, which many towns of far more pretensions present. Here and there a bow-window—every now and then a gable, cutting up against the sky—occasionally a projecting upper story—throws good effect of light and shadow along the street; and they have a queer fashion of their own of colouring the whitewash of some of the houses with a sort of pink blotting-paper tinge, more like the stone of which Mayence is built than anything else. It may be very bad taste, but to my mind it gives a rich warmth to the colouring. Then, here and there a dwelling-house has a court in front, with a grass-plot on each side of the flagged walk, and a large tree or two—limes *or horse-chestnuts*—which send their great projecting

upper branches over into the street, making round dry places of shelter on the pavement in the times of summer showers.

"While I was sitting in the bow-window, thinking of the contrast between this place and the lodgings in the heart of London, which I had left only twelve hours before,—the window open here, and, although in the centre of the town, admitting only scents from the mignonette boxes on the sill, instead of the dust and smoke of —— Street,—the only sound heard in this, the principal street, being the voices of mothers calling their playing children home to bed, and the eight o'clock bell of the old parish church bimbomming in remembrance of the curfew;—while I was sitting thus idly, the door opened, and the little maid-servant, dropping a courtesy, said—

"'Please, sir, Mrs. Munton's compliments, and she would be glad to know how you are after your journey.'

"There! was not that hearty and kind? Would even the dearest chum I had at Guy's have thought of doing such a thing? while Mrs. Munton, whose name I had never heard of before, was doubtless suffering anxiety till I could relieve her mind by sending back word that I was pretty well.

"'My compliments to Mrs. Munton, and I am pretty well: much obliged to her.' It was as well to say only 'pretty well,' for 'very well' would have destroyed the interest Mrs. Munton evidently felt in me. Good Mrs. Munton! Kind Mrs. Munton! Perhaps, also, young, —handsome,—rich,—widowed Mrs. Munton! I rubbed my hands with delight and amusement, and, resuming

my post of observation, began to wonder at which house Mrs. Munton lived.

"Again the little tap, and the little maid-servant:

"'Please, sir, Miss Tomkinsons' compliments, and they would be glad to know how you feel yourself after your journey.'

"I don't know why, but Miss Tomkinsons' name had not such a halo about it as Mrs. Munton's. Still it was very pretty in Miss Tomkinsons to send and inquire. I only wished I did not feel so perfectly robust. I was almost ashamed that I could not send word I was quite exhausted by fatigue, and had fainted twice since my arrival. If I had but had a headache, at least! I heaved a deep breath: my chest was in perfect order; I had caught no cold; so I answered again—

"'Much obliged to the Miss Tomkinsons; I am not much fatigued; tolerably well; my compliments.'

"Little Sally could hardly have got downstairs, before she returned, bright and breathless:—

"'Mr. and Mrs. Bullock's compliments, sir, and they hope you are pretty well after your journey.'

"Who would have expected such kindness from such an unpromising name? Mr. and Mrs. Bullock were less interesting, it is true, than their predecessors; but I graciously replied—

"'My compliments; a night's rest will perfectly recruit me.'

"The same message was presently brought up from one or two more unknown kind hearts. I really wished I were not so ruddy-looking. I was afraid I should disappoint the tender-hearted town when they saw what *a hale young* fellow I was. And I was almost ashamed

of confessing to a great appetite for supper when Sally came up to inquire what I would have. Beef-steaks were so tempting; but perhaps I ought rather to have water-gruel, and go to bed. The beef-steak carried the day, however. I need not have felt such a gentle elation of spirits, as this mark of the town's attention is paid to every one when they arrive after a journey. Many of the same people have sent to inquire after you,—great, hulking, brown fellow as you are,—only Sally spared you the infliction of devising interesting answers.

CHAPTER II.

"THE next morning Mr. Morgan came before I had finished breakfast. He was the most dapper little man I ever met. I see the affection with which people cling to the style of dress that was in vogue when they were beaux and belles, and received the most admiration. They are unwilling to believe that their youth and beauty are gone, and think that the prevailing mode is unbecoming. Mr. Morgan will inveigh by the hour together against frock-coats, for instance, and whiskers. He keeps his chin close shaven, wears a black dress-coat, and dark-grey pantaloons; and in his morning round to his town patients, he invariably wears the brightest and blackest of Hessian boots, with dangling silk tassels on each side. When he goes home, about ten o'clock, to prepare for his ride to see his country patients, he puts on the most dandy top-boots I ever

saw, which he gets from some wonderful boot-maker a hundred miles off. His appearance is what one calls 'jemmy:' there is no other word that will do for it. He was evidently a little discomfited when he saw me in my breakfast costume, with the habits which I brought with me from the fellows at Guy's; my feet against the fire-place, my chair balanced on its hind legs (a habit of sitting which I afterwards discovered he particularly abhorred); slippers on my feet (which, also, he considered a most ungentlemanly piece of untidiness 'out of a bedroom'); in short, from what I afterwards learned, every prejudice he had was outraged by my appearance on this first visit of his. I put my book down, and sprang up to receive him. He stood, hat and cane in hand.

"'I came to inquire if it would be convenient for you to accompany me on my morning's round, and to be introduced to a few of our friends.' I quite detected the little tone of coldness, induced by his disappointment at my appearance, though he never imagined that it was in any way perceptible. 'I will be ready directly, sir,' said I; and bolted into my bedroom, only too happy to escape his scrutinising eye.

"When I returned, I was made aware, by sundry indescribable little coughs and hesitating noises, that my dress did not satisfy him. I stood ready, hat and gloves in hand; but still he did not offer to set off on our round. I grew very red and hot. At length he said —

"'Excuse me, my dear young friend, but may I ask if you have no other coat besides that—'cut-away,' I believe you call them?—We are rather sticklers for *propriety*, I believe, in Duncombe; and much depends

on a first impression. Let it be professional, my dear sir. Black is the garb of our profession. Forgive my speaking so plainly, but I consider myself *in loco parentis.*'

"He was so kind, so bland, and, in truth, so friendly, that I felt it would be most childish to take offence; but I had a little resentment in my heart at this way of being treated. However, I mumbled, 'Oh, certainly, sir, if you wish it;' and returned once more to change my coat—my poor cut-away.

"'Those coats, sir, give a man rather too much of a sporting appearance, not quite befitting the learned professions; more as if you came down here to hunt than to be the Galen or Hippocrates of the neighbourhood.' He smiled graciously, so I smothered a sigh; for, to tell you the truth, I had rather anticipated—and, in fact, had boasted at Guy's of the runs I hoped to have with the hounds; for Duncombe was in a famous hunting district. But all these ideas were quite dispersed when Mr. Morgan led me to the inn-yard, where there was a horse-dealer on his way to a neighbouring fair, and 'strongly advised me,'—which in our relative circumstances was equivalent to an injunction,—to purchase a little, useful, fast-trotting, brown cob, instead of a fine showy horse, 'who would take any fence I put him to,' as the horse-dealer assured me. Mr. Morgan was evidently pleased when I bowed to his decision, and gave up all hopes of an occasional hunt.

"He opened out a great deal more after this purchase. He told me his plan of establishing me in a house of my own, which looked more respectable, not to say *professional,* than being in lodgings; and then he

went on to say that he had lately lost a friend, a brother surgeon in a neighbouring town, who had left a widow with a small income, who would be very glad to live with me, and act as mistress to my establishment; thus lessening the expense.

"'She is a lady-like woman,' said Mr. Morgan, 'to judge from the little I have seen of her; about forty-five or so; and may really be of some help to you in the little etiquettes of our profession; the slight delicate attentions which every man has to learn, if he wishes to get on in life. This is Mrs. Munton's, sir,' said he, stopping short at a very unromantic-looking green door, with a brass knocker.

"I had no time to say, 'Who is Mrs. Munton?' before we had heard Mrs. Munton was at home, and were following the tidy elderly servant up the narrow carpeted stairs into the drawing-room. Mrs. Munton was the widow of a former vicar, upwards of sixty, rather deaf; but like all the deaf people I have ever seen, very fond of talking; perhaps because she then knew the subject, which passed out of her grasp when another began to speak. She was ill of a chronic complaint, which often incapacitated her from going out; and the kind people of the town were in the habit of coming to see her and sit with her, and of bringing her the newest, freshest, tid-bits of news; so that her room was the centre of the gossip of Duncombe;—not of scandal, mind; for I make a distinction between gossip and scandal. Now you can fancy the discrepancy between the ideal and the real Mrs. Munton. Instead of any foolish notion of a beautiful blooming widow, tenderly anxious about the *health of* the stranger, I saw a homely, talkative, elderly

person, with a keen observant eye, and marks of suffering on her face; plain in manner and dress, but still unmistakeably a lady. She talked to Mr. Morgan, but she looked at me; and I saw that nothing I did escaped her notice. Mr. Morgan annoyed me by his anxiety to show me off; but he was kindly anxious to bring out every circumstance to my credit in Mrs. Munton's hearing, knowing well that the town crier had not more opportunities to publish all about me than she had.

"'What was that remark you repeated to me of Sir Astley Cooper's?' asked he. It had been the most trivial speech in the world that I had named as we walked along, and I felt ashamed of having to repeat it: but it answered Mr. Morgan's purpose, and before night all the town had heard that I was a favourite pupil of Sir Astley's (I had never seen him but twice in my life); and Mr. Morgan was afraid that as soon as he knew my full value I should be retained by Sir Astley to assist him in his duties as surgeon to the Royal Family. Every little circumstance was pressed into the conversation which could add to my importance.

"'As I once heard Sir Robert Peel remark to Mr. Harrison, the father of our young friend here—The moons in August are remarkably full and bright.'—If you remember, Charles, my father was always proud of having sold a pair of gloves to Sir Robert, when he was staying at the Grange, near Biddicombe, and I suppose good Mr. Morgan had paid his only visit to my father at the time; but Mrs. Munton evidently looked at me with double respect after this incidental remark, which I was amused to meet with, a few months afterwards, disguised in the *statement* that my father was an intimate friend

of the Premier's, and had, in fact, been the adviser of most of the measures taken by him in public life. I sat by, half indignant and half amused. Mr. Morgan looked so complacently pleased at the whole effect of the conversation, that I did not care to mar it by explanations; and, indeed, I had little idea at the time how small sayings were the seeds of great events in the town of Duncombe. When we left Mrs. Munton's, he was in a blandly communicative mood.

"'You will find it a curious statistical fact, but five-sixths of our householders of a certain rank in Duncombe are women. We have widows and old maids in rich abundance. In fact, my dear sir, I believe that you and I are almost the only gentlemen in the place,—Mr. Bullock, of course, excepted. By gentlemen, I mean professional men. It behoves us to remember, sir, that so many of the female sex rely upon us for the kindness and protection which every man who is worthy of the name is always so happy to render.'

"Miss Tomkinson, where we next called, did not strike me as remarkably requiring protection from any man. She was a tall, gaunt, masculine-looking woman, with an air of defiance about her, naturally; this, however, she softened and mitigated, as far as she was able, in favour of Mr. Morgan. He, it seemed to me, stood a little in awe of the lady, who was very *brusque* and plain-spoken, and evidently piqued herself on her decision of character and sincerity of speech.

"'So, this is the Mr. Harrison we have heard so much of from you, Mr. Morgan? I must say, from what I had heard, that I had expected something a little *more*—*hum*—hum! But he's young yet; he's young.

We have been all anticipating an Apollo, Mr. Harrison, from Mr. Morgan's description, and an Æsculapius combined in one; or, perhaps I might confine myself to saying Apollo, as he, I believe, was the god of medicine!'

"How could Mr. Morgan have described me without seeing me? I asked myself.

"Miss Tomkinson put on her spectacles, and adjusted them on her Roman nose. Suddenly relaxing from her severity of inspection, she said to Mr. Morgan—'But you must see Caroline. I had nearly forgotten it; she is busy with the girls, but I will send for her. She had a bad headache yesterday, and looked very pale; it made me very uncomfortable.'

"She rang the bell and desired the servant to fetch Miss Caroline.

"Miss Caroline was the younger sister—younger by twenty years; and so considered as a child by Miss Tomkinson, who was fifty-five, at the very least. If she was considered as a child, she was also petted and caressed, and cared for as a child; for she had been left as a baby to the charge of her elder sister; and when the father died, and they had to set up a school, Miss Tomkinson took upon herself every difficult arrangement, and denied herself every pleasure, and made every sacrifice in order that 'Carry' might not feel the change in their circumstances. My wife tells me she once knew the sisters purchase a piece of silk, enough, with management, to have made two gowns; but Carry wished for flounces, or some such fal-lals; and, without a word, Miss Tomkinson gave up her gown to have the whole made up as Carry wished, into one handsome one; and wore an old shabby affair herself as cheerfully as if it were *Genoa velvet*. That tells the sort of relationship

between the sisters as well as anything, and I consider myself very good to name it thus early, for it was long before I found out Miss Tomkinson's real goodness; and we had a great quarrel first. Miss Caroline looked very delicate and die-away when she came in; she was as soft and sentimental as Miss Tomkinson was hard and masculine; and had a way of saying, 'Oh, sister, how can you?' at Miss Tomkinson's startling speeches, which I never liked,—especially as it was accompanied by a sort of protesting look at the company present, as if she wished to have it understood that she was shocked at her sister's *outré* manners. Now, that was not faithful between sisters. A remonstrance in private might have done good,—though, for my own part, I have grown to like Miss Tomkinson's speeches and ways; but I don't like the way some people have of separating themselves from what may be unpopular in their relations. I know I spoke rather shortly to Miss Caroline when she asked me whether I could bear the change from 'the great metropolis' to a little country village. In the first place, why could not she call it 'London,' or 'town,' and have done with it? And in the next place, why should she not love the place that was her home well enough to fancy that every one would like it when they came to know it as well as she did?

"I was conscious I was rather abrupt in my conversation with her, and I saw that Mr. Morgan was watching me, though he pretended to be listening to Miss Tomkinson's whispered account of her sister's symptoms. But when we were once more in the street, he began, 'My dear young friend'——

"*I winced*; for all the morning I had noticed that [illegible] was going to give a little unpalatable advice, he

always began with 'My dear young friend.' He had done so about the horse.

"'My dear young friend, there are one or two hints I should like to give you about your manner. The great Sir Everard Home used to say, 'a general practitioner should either have a very good manner, or a very bad one.' Now, in the latter case, he must be possessed of talents and acquirements sufficient to insure his being sought after, whatever his manner might be. But the rudeness will give notoriety to these qualifications. Abernethy is a case in point. I rather, myself, question the taste of bad manners. I, therefore, have studied to acquire an attentive, anxious politeness, which combines ease and grace with a tender regard and interest. I am not aware whether I have succeeded (few men do) in coming up to my ideal; but I recommend you to strive after this manner, peculiarly befitting our profession. Identify yourself with your patients, my dear sir. You have sympathy in your good heart, I am sure, to really feel pain when listening to their account of their sufferings, and it soothes them to see the expression of this feeling in your manner. It is, in fact, sir, manners that make the man in our profession. I don't set myself up as an example, far from it;—but——This is Mr. Hutton's, our vicar; one of the servants is indisposed, and I shall be glad of the opportunity of introducing you. We can resume our conversation at another time.'

"I had not been aware that we had been holding a conversation, in which, I believe, the assistance of two persons is required. Why had not Mr. Hutton sent to ask after my health the evening before, according to the *custom of the* place? I felt rather offended."

CHAPTER III.

"THE vicarage was on the north side of the street, at the end opening towards the hills. It was a long low house, receding behind its neighbours; a court was between the door and the street, with a flag-walk and an old stone cistern on the right-hand side of the door; Solomon's seal growing under the windows. Some one was watching from behind the window-curtain; for the door opened, as if by magic, as soon as we reached it; and we entered a low room, which served as hall, and was matted all over, with deep old-fashioned window-seats, and Dutch tiles in the fire-place; altogether it was very cool and refreshing, after the hot sun in the white and red street.

"'Bessy is not so well, Mr. Morgan,' said the sweet little girl of eleven or so, who had opened the door. 'Sophy wanted to send for you; but papa said he was sure you would come soon this morning, and we were to remember that there were other sick people wanting you.'

"'Here's Mr. Morgan, Sophy,' said she, opening the door into an inner room, to which we descended a step, as I remember well,—for I was nearly falling down it, I was so caught by the picture within. It was like a picture,—at least, seen through the door-frame. A sort of mixture of crimson and sea-green in the room, and a sunny garden beyond; a very low casement window, open to the amber air; clusters of white roses peeping in, and Sophy sitting on a cushion on the ground, the light coming from above on her

head, and a little sturdy round-eyed brother kneeling by her, to whom she was teaching the alphabet. It was a mighty relief to him when we came in, as I could see; and I am much mistaken if he was easily caught again to say his lesson, when he was once sent off to find papa. Sophy rose quietly, and of course we were just introduced, and that was all, before she took Mr. Morgan upstairs to see her sick servant. I was left to myself in the room. It looked so like a home, that it at once made me know the full charm of the word. There were books and work about, and tokens of employment; there was a child's plaything on the floor; and against the sea-green walls there hung a likeness or two, done in water-colours;—one, I was sure, was that of Sophy's mother. The chairs and sofa were covered with chintz, the same as the curtains—a little pretty red rose on a white ground. I don't know where the crimson came from, but I am sure there was crimson somewhere; perhaps in the carpet. There was a glass door besides the window, and you went up a step into the garden. This was first, a grass plot, just under the windows, and beyond that, straight gravel walks, with box-borders and narrow flower-beds on each side, most brilliant and gay at the end of August, as it was then; and behind the flower-borders were fruit-trees trained over wood-work, so as to shut out the beds of kitchen-garden within.

"While I was looking round, a gentleman came in, who, I was sure, was the vicar. It was rather awkward, for I had to account for my presence there.

"'I came with Mr. Morgan; my name is Harrison,' said I, *bowing*. I could see he was not much enlightened

by this explanation, but we sat down and talked about the time of year, or some such matter, till Sophy and Mr. Morgan came back. Then I saw Mr. Morgan to advantage. With a man whom he respected, as he did the vicar, he lost the prim artificial manner he had in general, and was calm and dignified; but not so dignified as the vicar. I never saw any one like him. He was very quiet and reserved, almost absent at times; his personal appearance was not striking; but he was altogether a man you would talk to with your hat off whenever you met him. It was his character that produced this effect—character that he never thought about, but that appeared in every word, and look, and motion.

"'Sophy,' said he, 'Mr. Morgan looks very warm; could you not gather a few jargonelle pears off the south wall? I fancy there are some ripe there. Our jargonelle pears are remarkably early this year.'

"Sophy went into the sunny garden, and I saw her take a rake and tilt at the pears, which were above her reach, apparently. The parlour had become chilly (I found out afterwards it had a flag floor, which accounts for its coldness), and I thought I should like to go into the warm sun. I said I would go and help the young lady; and without waiting for an answer, I went into the warm, scented garden, where the bees were rifling the flowers, and making a continual busy sound. I think Sophy had begun to despair of getting the fruit, and was glad of my assistance. I thought I was very senseless to have knocked them down so soon, when I found we were to go in as soon as they were gathered. *I should* have liked to have walked round the garden,

but Sophy walked straight off with the pears, and I could do nothing but follow her. She took up her needlework while we ate them: they were very soon finished, and when the vicar had ended his conversation with Mr. Morgan about some poor people, we rose up to come away. I was thankful that Mr. Morgan had said so little about me. I could not have endured that he should have introduced Sir Astley Cooper or Sir Robert Peel at the vicarage; not yet could I have brooked much mention of my 'great opportunities for acquiring a thorough knowledge of my profession,' which I had heard him describe to Miss Tomkinson, while her sister was talking to me. Luckily, however, he spared me all this at the vicar's. When we left, it was time to mount our horses and go the country rounds, and I was glad of it."

CHAPTER IV.

"By-and-by the inhabitants of Duncombe began to have parties in my honour. Mr. Morgan told me it was on my account, or I don't think I should have found it out. But he was pleased at every fresh invitation, and rubbed his hands, and chuckled, as if it was a compliment to himself, as in truth it was.

"Meanwhile, the arrangement with Mrs. Rose had been brought to a conclusion. She was to bring her furniture, and place it in a house, of which I was to pay the rent. She was to be the mistress, and, in return,

she was not to pay anything for her board. Mr. Morgan took the house, and delighted in advising and settling all my affairs. I was partly indolent, and partly amused, and was altogether passive. The house he took for me was near his own : it had two sitting-rooms downstairs, opening into each other by folding-doors, which were, however, kept shut in general. The back room was my consulting room ('the library,' he advised me to call it), and gave me a skull to put on the top of my bookcase, in which the medical books were all ranged on the conspicuous shelves; while Miss Austen, Dickens, and Thackeray were, by Mr. Morgan himself, skilfully placed in a careless way, upside down, or with their backs turned to the wall. The front parlour was to be the dining-room, and the room above was furnished with Mrs. Rose's drawing-room chairs and table, though I found she preferred sitting downstairs in the dining-room close to the window, where, between every stitch, she could look up and see what was going on in the street. I felt rather queer to be the master of this house, filled with another person's furniture, before I had even seen the lady whose property it was.

"Presently she arrived. Mr. Morgan met her at the inn where the coach stopped, and accompanied her to my house. I could see them out of the drawing-room window, the little gentleman stepping daintily along, flourishing his cane, and evidently talking away. She was a little taller than he was, and in deep widow's mourning; such veils and falls, and capes and cloaks, that she looked like a black crape haycock. When we were introduced, she put up her thick veil, and looked *around* and sighed.

"'Your appearance and circumstances, Mr. Harrison, remind me forcibly of the time when I was married to my dear husband, now at rest. He was then, like you, commencing practice as a surgeon. For twenty years I sympathized with him, and assisted him by every means in my power, even to making up pills when the young man was out. May we live together in like harmony for an equal length of time! May the regard between us be equally sincere, although, instead of being conjugal, it is to be maternal and filial!'

"I am sure she had been concocting this speech in the coach, for she afterwards told me she was the only passenger. When she had ended, I felt as if I ought to have had a glass of wine in my hand to drink, after the manner of toasts. And yet I doubt if I should have done it heartily, for I did not hope to live with her for twenty years; it had rather a dreary sound. However, I only bowed, and kept my thoughts to myself. I asked Mr. Morgan, while Mrs. Rose was upstairs taking off her things, to stay to tea; to which he agreed, and kept rubbing his hands with satisfaction, saying—

"'Very fine woman, sir; very fine woman! And what a manner! How she will receive patients, who may wish to leave a message during your absence. Such a flow of words to be sure!'

"Mr. Morgan could not stay long after tea, as there were one or two cases to be seen. I would willingly have gone, and had my hat on, indeed, for the purpose, when he said it would not be respectful, 'not the thing,' to leave Mrs. Rose the first evening of her arrival.

"'Tender deference to the sex,—to a widow in the first months *of her lo*neliness,—requires little considera-

tion, my dear sir. I will leave that case at Miss Tomkinson's for you; you will perhaps call early to-morrow morning. Miss Tomkinson is rather particular, and is apt to speak plainly if she does not think herself properly attended to.'

"I had often noticed that he shuffled off the visits to Miss Tomkinson's on me, and I suspect he was a little afraid of the lady.

"It was rather a long evening with Mrs. Rose. She had nothing to do, thinking it civil, I suppose, to stop in the parlour, and not go upstairs and unpack. I begged I might be no restraint upon her if she wished to do so; but (rather to my disappointment) she smiled in a measured, subdued way, and said it would be a pleasure to her to become better acquainted with me. She went upstairs once, and my heart misgave me when I saw her come down with a clean folded pocket-handkerchief. Oh, my prophetic soul!—she was no sooner seated, than she began to give me an account of her late husband's illness, and symptoms, and death. It was a very common case, but she evidently seemed to think it had been peculiar. She had just a smattering of medical knowledge, and used the technical terms so very *mal àpropos* that I could hardly keep from smiling; but I would not have done it for the world, she was evidently in such deep and sincere distress. At last she said—

"'I have the "dognoses" of my dear husband's complaint in my desk, Mr. Harrison, if you would like to draw up the case for the *Lancet*. I think he would have felt gratified, poor fellow, if he had been told such a compliment would be paid to his remains, and that his case should appear in those distinguished columns.'

"It was rather awkward; for the case was of the very commonest, as I said before. However, I had not been even this short time in practice without having learnt a few of those noises which do not compromise one, and yet may bear a very significant construction if the listener chooses to exert a little imagination.

"Before the end of the evening, we were such friends that she brought me down the late Mr. Rose's picture to look at. She told me she could not bear, herself, to gaze upon the beloved features; but that if I would look upon the miniature, she would avert her face. I offered to take it into my own hands, but she seemed wounded at the proposal, and said she never, never could trust such a treasure out of her own possession; so she turned her head very much over her left shoulder, while I examined the likeness held by her extended right arm.

"The late Mr. Rose must have been rather a good-looking jolly man; and the artist had given him such a broad smile, and such a twinkle about the eyes, that it really was hard to help smiling back at him. However, I restrained myself.

"At first Mrs. Rose objected to accepting any of the invitations which were sent her to accompany me to the tea-parties in the town. She was so good and simple, that I was sure she had no other reason than the one which she alleged—the short time that had elapsed since her husband's death; or else, now that I had had some experience of the entertainments which she declined so pertinaciously, I might have suspected that she was glad of the excuse. I used sometimes to wish that I was a widow. I came home tired from a hard day's riding, and if I had but felt sure that Mr. Morgan would

not come in, I should certainly have put on my slippers and my loose morning coat, and have indulged in a cigar in the garden. It seemed a cruel sacrifice to society to dress myself in tight boots, and a stiff coat, and go to a five o'clock tea. But Mr. Morgan read me such lectures upon the necessity of cultivating the good-will of the people among whom I was settled, and seemed so sorry, and almost hurt, when I once complained of the dulness of these parties, that I felt I could not be so selfish as to decline more than one out of three. Mr. Morgan, if he found that I had an invitation for the evening, would often take the longer round, and the more distant visits. I suspected him at first of the design, which I confess I often entertained, of shirking the parties; but I soon found out he was really making a sacrifice of his inclinations for what he considered to be my advantage."

CHAPTER V.

"THERE was one invitation which seemed to promise a good deal of pleasure. Mr. Bullock (who is the attorney of Duncombe) was married a second time to a lady from a large provincial town; she wished to lead the fashion, —a thing very easy to do, for every one was willing to follow her. So instead of giving a tea-party in my honour, she proposed a pic-nic to some old hall in the neighbourhood; and really the arrangements sounded tempting enough. Every patient we had seemed full

of the subject; both those who were invited and those who were not. There was a moat round the house, with a boat on it; and there was a gallery in the hall, from which music sounded delightfully. The family to whom the place belonged were abroad, and lived at a newer and grander mansion when they were at home; there were only a farmer and his wife in the old hall, and they were to have the charge of the preparations. The little, kind-hearted town was delighted when the sun shone bright on the October morning of our pic-nic; the shopkeepers and cottagers all looked pleased as they saw the cavalcade gathering at Mr. Bullock's door. We were somewhere about twenty in number; a 'silent few,' she called us; but I thought we were quite enough. There were the Miss Tomkinsons, and two of their young ladies—one of them belonged to a 'county family,' Mrs. Bullock told me in a whisper; then came Mr. and Mrs. and Miss Bullock, and a tribe of little children, the offspring of the present wife. Miss Bullock was only a step-daughter. Mrs. Munton had accepted the invitation to join our party, which was rather unexpected by the host and hostess, I imagine, from little remarks that I overheard; but they made her very welcome. Miss Horsman (a maiden lady who had been on a visit from home till last week) was another. And last, there were the vicar and his children. These, with Mr. Morgan and myself, made up the party. I was very much pleased to see something more of the vicar's family. He had come in occasionally to the evening parties, it is true; and spoken kindly to us all; but it was not his habit to stay very long at them. And his daughter was, he said, too young to vi-

She had had the charge of her little sisters and brother since her mother's death, which took up a good deal of her time, and she was glad of the evenings to pursue her own studies. But to-day the case was different; and Sophy, and Helen, and Lizzie, and even little Walter, were all there, standing at Mrs. Bullock's door; for we none of us could be patient enough to sit still in the parlour with Mrs. Munton and the elder ones, quietly waiting for the two chaises and the spring-cart, which were to have been there by two o'clock, and now it was nearly a quarter past. 'Shameful! the brightness of the day would be gone.' The sympathetic shopkeepers standing at their respective doors with their hands in their pockets, had, one and all, their heads turned in the direction from which the carriages (as Mrs. Bullock called them) were to come. There was a rumble along the paved street; and the shopkeepers turned and smiled, and bowed their heads congratulatingly to us; all the mothers and all the little children of the place stood clustering round the door to see us set off. I had my horse waiting; and, meanwhile, I assisted people into their vehicles. One sees a good deal of management on such occasions. Mrs. Munton was handed first into one of the chaises; then there was a little hanging back, for most of the young people wished to go in the cart,—I don't know why. Miss Horsman, however, came forward, and as she was known to be the intimate friend of Mrs. Munton, so far was satisfactory. But who was to be third?—bodkin with two old ladies, who liked the windows shut? I saw Sophy speaking to Helen; and then she came forward and offered to be the third. The two old ladies looked

pleased and glad (as every one did near Sophy); so that chaise-full was arranged. Just as it was going off, however, the servant from the vicarage came running with a note for her master. When he had read it, he went to the chaise-door, and I suppose told Sophy, what I afterwards heard him say to Mrs. Bullock, that the clergyman of a neighbouring parish was ill, and unable to read the funeral service for one of his parishioners, who was to be buried that afternoon. The vicar was, of course, obliged to go, and said he should not return home that night. It seemed a relief to some, I perceived, to be without the little restraint of his dignified presence. Mr. Morgan came up just at the moment, having ridden hard all the morning to be in time to join our party; so we were resigned, on the whole, to the vicar's absence. His own family regretted him the most, I noticed, and I liked them all the better for it. I believe that I came next in being sorry for his departure; but I respected and admired him, and felt always the better for having been in his company. Miss Tomkinson, Mrs. Bullock, and the 'county' young lady, were in the next chaise. I think the last would rather have been in the cart with the younger and merrier set, but I imagine that was considered *infra dig.* The remainder of the party were to ride and tie; and a most riotous laughing set they were. Mr. Morgan and I were on horseback; at least I led my horse, with little Walter riding on him; his fat, sturdy legs standing stiff out on each side of my cob's broad back. He was a little darling, and chattered all the way, his sister Sophy being the heroine of all his stories. I found he owed *this day*'s excursion entirely to her begging

papa to let him come; nurse was strongly against it—'cross old nurse!' he called her once, and then said, 'No, not cross; kind nurse; Sophy tells Walter not to say cross nurse.' I never saw so young a child so brave. The horse shied at a log of wood. Walter looked very red, and grasped the mane, but sat upright like a little man, and never spoke all the time the horse was dancing. When it was over he looked at me, and smiled—

"'You would not let me be hurt, Mr. Harrison, would you?' He was the most winning little fellow I ever saw.

"There were frequent cries to me from the cart, 'Oh, Mr. Harrison! do get us that branch of blackberries; you can reach it with your whip handle.' 'Oh, Mr. Harrison! there were such splendid nuts on the other side of that hedge; would you just turn back for them?' Miss Caroline Tomkinson was once or twice rather faint with the motion of the cart, and asked me for my smelling-bottle, as she had forgotten hers. I was amused at the idea of my carrying such articles about with me. Then she thought she should like to walk, and got out, and came on my side of the road; but I found little Walter the pleasanter companion, and soon set the horse off into a trot, with which pace her tender constitution could not keep up.

"The road to the old hall was along a sandy lane, with high hedge-banks; the wych-elms almost met overhead. 'Shocking farming!' Mr. Bullock called out; and so it might be, but it was very pleasant and picturesque looking. The trees were gorgeous, in their orange and crimson hues, varied by great dark green

holly bushes, glistening in the autumn sun. I should have thought the colours too vivid, if I had seen them in a picture, especially when we wound up the brow, after crossing the little bridge over the brook—(what laughing and screaming there was as the cart splashed through the sparkling water!)—and I caught the purple hills beyond. We could see the old hall, too, from that point, with its warm rich woods billowing up behind, and the blue waters of the moat lying still under the sunlight.

"Laughing and talking is very hungry work, and there was a universal petition for dinner when we arrived at the lawn before the hall, where it had been arranged that we were to dine. I saw Miss Carry take Miss Tomkinson aside, and whisper to her; and presently the elder sister came up to me, where I was busy, rather apart, making a seat of hay, which I had fetched from the farmer's loft for my little friend Walter, who, I had noticed, was rather hoarse, and for whom I was afraid of a seat on the grass, dry as it appeared to be.

"'Mr. Harrison, Caroline tells me she has been feeling very faint, and she is afraid of a return of one of her attacks. She says she has more confidence in your medical powers than in Mr. Morgan's. I should not be sincere if I did not say that I differ from her; but as it is so, may I beg you to keep an eye upon her? I tell her she had better not have come if she did not feel well; but, poor girl, she had set her heart upon this day's pleasure. I have offered to go home with her; but she says, if she can only feel sure you are at hand, she would rather stay.'

"*Of course I bowed*, and promised all due attend-

ance on Miss Caroline; and in the mean time, until she did require my services, I thought I might as well go and help the vicar's daughter, who looked so fresh and pretty in her white muslin dress, here, there, and everywhere, now in the sunshine, now in the green shade, helping every one to be comfortable, and thinking of every one but herself.

"Presently Mr. Morgan came up.

"'Miss Caroline does not feel quite well. I have promised your services to her sister.'

"'So have I, sir. But Miss Sophy cannot carry this heavy basket.'

"I did not mean her to have heard this excuse; but she caught it up and said—

"'Oh, yes, I can! I can take the things out one by one. Go to poor Miss Caroline, pray, Mr. Harrison.'

"I went; but very unwillingly, I must say. When I had once seated myself by her, I think she must have felt better. It was, probably, only a nervous fear, which was relieved when she knew she had assistance near at hand; for she made a capital dinner. I thought she would never end her modest requests for 'just a little more pigeon-pie, or a merry-thought of chicken.' Such a hearty meal would, I hoped, effectually revive her; and so it did; for she told me she thought she could manage to walk round the garden, and see the old peacock yews, if I would kindly give her my arm. It was very provoking; I had so set my heart upon being with the vicar's children. I advised Miss Caroline strongly to lie down a little, and rest before tea, on the sofa in the farmer's kitchen; you cannot think how persuasively I begged her to take care of herself. At last

she consented, thanking me for my tender interest; she should never forget my kind attention to her. She little knew what was in my mind at the time. However, she was safely consigned to the farmer's wife, and I was rushing out in search of a white gown and a waving figure, when I encountered Mrs. Bullock at the door of the Hall. She was a fine, fierce-looking woman. I thought she had appeared a little displeased at my (unwilling) attentions to Miss Caroline at dinner-time; but now, seeing me alone, she was all smiles.

" 'Oh, Mr. Harrison, all alone! How is that? What are the young ladies about to allow such churlishness? And, by the way, I have left a young lady who will be very glad of your assistance, I am sure—my daughter, Jemima (her step-daughter, she meant). Mr. Bullock is so particular, and so tender a father, that he would be frightened to death at the idea of her going into the boat on the moat unless she was with some one who could swim. He is gone to discuss the new wheel-plough with the farmer—(you know agriculture is his hobby, although law, horrid law, is his business). But the poor girl is pining on the bank, longing for my permission to join the others, which I dare not give unless you will kindly accompany her, and promise, if any accident happens, to preserve her safe.'

" Oh, Sophy, why was no one anxious about you?"

CHAPTER VI.

"Miss Bullock was standing by the water-side, looking wistfully, as I thought, at the water-party; the sound of whose merry laughter came pleasantly enough from the boat, which lay off (for, indeed, no one knew how to row, and she was of a clumsy flat-bottomed build,) about a hundred yards, 'weather-bound,' as they shouted out, among the long stalks of the water-lilies.

"Miss Bullock did not look up till I came close to her; and then, when I told her my errand, she lifted up her great heavy, sad eyes, and looked at me for a moment. It struck me, at the time, that she expected to find some expression on my face which was not there, and that its absence was a relief to her. She was a very pale, unhappy-looking girl, but very quiet, and, if not agreeable in manner, at any rate not forward or offensive. I called to the party in the boat, and they came slowly enough through the large, cool, green lily-leaves towards us. When they got near, we saw there was no room for us, and Miss Bullock said she would rather stay in the meadow and saunter about, if I would go into the boat; and I am certain from the look on her countenance that she spoke the truth; but Miss Horsman called out in a sharp voice, while she smiled in a very disagreeable knowing way,—

"'Oh, mamma will be displeased if you don't come in, Miss Bullock, after all her trouble in making such a nice arrangement.'

"At this speech the poor girl hesitated, and at last, in an undecided way, as if she was not sure whether she

was doing right, she took Sophy's place in the boat. Helen and Lizzie landed with their sister, so that there was plenty of room for Miss Tomkinson, Miss Horsman, and all the little Bullocks; and the three vicarage girls went off strolling along the meadow side, and playing with Walter who was in a high state of excitement. The sun was getting low, but the declining light was beautiful upon the water; and, to add to the charm of the time, Sophy and her sisters, standing on the green lawn, in front of the hall, struck up the little German canon, which I had never heard before,—

'Oh wie wohl ist mir am abend,' &c.

At last we were summoned to tug the boat to the landing-steps on the lawn, tea and a blazing wood fire being ready for us in the hall. I was offering my arm to Miss Horsman, as she was a little lame, when she said again, in her peculiar disagreeable way, 'Had you not better take Miss Bullock, Mr. Harrison? It will be more satisfactory.'

"I helped Miss Horsman up the steps, however, and then she repeated her advice; so, remembering that Miss Bullock was in fact the daughter of my entertainers, I went to her; but though she accepted my arm, I could perceive she was sorry that I had offered it.

"The hall was lighted by the glorious wood fire in the wide old grate; the daylight was dying away in the west; and the large windows admitted but little of what was left, through their small leaded frames, with coats of arms emblazoned upon them. The farmer's wife had set out a great long table, which was piled with good things; and a huge black kettle sang on the glowing

fire, which sent a cheerful warmth through the room as it crackled and blazed. Mr. Morgan (who I found had been taking a little round in the neighbourhood among his patients) was there smiling and rubbing his hands as usual. Mr. Bullock was holding a conversation with the farmer at the garden door on the nature of different manures, in which it struck me that if Mr. Bullock had the fine names and the theories on his side, the farmer had all the practical knowledge and the experience, and I know which I would have trusted. I think Mr. Bullock rather liked to talk about Liebig in my hearing; it sounded well, and was knowing. Mrs. Bullock was not particularly placid in her mood. In the first place, I wanted to sit by the vicar's daughter, and Miss Caroline as decidedly wanted to sit on my other side, being afraid of her fainting fits, I imagine. But Mrs. Bullock called me to a place near her daughter. Now I thought I had done enough civility to a girl who was evidently annoyed rather than pleased by my attentions, and I pretended to be busy stooping under the table for Miss Caroline's gloves, which were missing; but it was of no avail; Mrs. Bullock's fine severe eyes were awaiting my re-appearance, and she summoned me again.

"'I am keeping this place on my right hand for you, Mr. Harrison. Jemima; sit still!'

"I went up to the post of honour and tried to busy myself with pouring out coffee to hide my chagrin; but after forgetting to empty the water put in ('to warm the cups,' Mrs. Bullock said), and omitting to add any sugar, the lady told me she would dispense with my services, and turn me over to my neighbour on the other side.

" 'Talking to the younger lady was, no doubt, more Mr. Harrison's vocation than assisting the elder one.' I dare say it was only the manner that made the words seem offensive. Miss Horsman sat opposite to me, smiling away. Miss Bullock did not speak, but seemed more depressed than ever. At length Miss Horsman and Mrs. Bullock got to a war of innendoes, which were completely unintelligible to me; and I was very much displeased with my situation. While, at the bottom of the table, Mr. Morgan and Mr. Bullock were making the young ones laugh most heartily. Part of the joke was Mr. Morgan's insisting upon making tea at that end; and Sophy and Helen were busy contriving every possible mistake for him. I thought honour was a very good thing, but merriment a better. Here was I in the place of distinction, hearing nothing but cross words. At last the time came for us to go home. As the evening was damp, the seats in the chaises were the best and most to be desired.—And now Sophy offered to go in the cart; only she seemed anxious, and so was I, that Walter should be secured from the effects of the white wreaths of fog rolling up from the valley; but the little violent, affectionate fellow would not be separated from Sophy. She made a nest for him on her knee in one corner of the cart, and covered him with her own shawl; and I hoped that he would take no harm. Miss Tomkinson, Mr. Bullock, and some of the young ones walked; but I seemed chained to the windows of the chaise, for Miss Caroline begged me not to leave her, as she was dreadfully afraid of robbers; and Mrs. Bullock implored me to see that the man did not overturn them in the bad roads, *as he had certainly* had too much to drink.

"I became so irritable before I reached home, that I thought it was the most disagreeable day of pleasure I had ever had, and could hardly bear to answer Mrs. Rose's never-ending questions. She told me, however, that from my account the day was so charming that she thought she should relax in the rigour of her seclusion, and mingle a little more in the society of which I gave so tempting a description. She really thought her dear Mr. Rose would have wished it; and his will should be law to her after his death, as it had ever been during his life. In compliance, therefore, with his wishes, she would even do a little violence to her own feelings.

"She was very good and kind; not merely attentive to everything which she thought could conduce to my comfort, but willing to take any trouble in providing the broths and nourishing food which I often found it convenient to order, under the name of kitchen-physic, for my poorer patients; and I really did not see the use of her shutting herself up, in mere compliance with an etiquette, when she began to wish to mix in the little quiet society of Duncombe. Accordingly I urged her to begin to visit, and even when applied to as to what I imagined the late Mr. Rose's wishes on that subject would have been, answered for that worthy gentleman, and assured his widow that I was convinced he would have regretted deeply her giving way to immoderate grief, and would have been rather grateful than otherwise at seeing her endeavour to divert her thoughts by a few quiet visits. She cheered up, and said, 'as I really thought so, she would sacrifice her own inclinations, and *accept* the very next invitation that came.'

CHAPTER VII.

"I WAS roused from my sleep in the middle of the night by a messenger from the vicarage. Little Walter had got the croup, and Mr. Morgan had been sent for into the country. I dressed myself hastily, and went through the quiet little street. There was a light burning upstairs at the vicarage. It was in the nursery. The servant, who opened the door the instant I knocked, was crying sadly, and could hardly answer my inquiries as I went up stairs, two steps at a time, to see my little favourite.

"The nursery was a great large room. At the farther end it was lighted by a common candle, which left the other end, where the door was, in shade, so I suppose the nurse did not see me come in, for she was speaking very crossly.

"'Miss Sophy!' said she, 'I told you over and over again it was not fit for him to go, with the hoarseness that he had, and you would take him. It will break your papa's heart, I know; but it's none of my doing.'

"Whatever Sophy felt, she did not speak in answer to this. She was on her knees by the warm bath, in which the little fellow was struggling to get his breath, with a look of terror on his face that I have often noticed in young children when smitten by a sudden and violent illness. It seems as if they recognised something infinite and invisible, at whose bidding the pain and the anguish come, from which no love can shield them. It is a very heart-rending look to observe, because it comes on the faces of those who are too young to receive comfort from

the words of faith, or the promises of religion. Walter had his arms tight round Sophy's neck, as if she, hitherto his paradise-angel, could save him from the dread shadow of Death. Yes! of Death! I knelt down by him on the other side, and examined him. The very robustness of his little frame gave violence to the disease, which is always one of the most fearful by which children of his age can be attacked.

"'Don't tremble, Watty,' said Sophy, in a soothing tone; 'it's Mr. Harrison, darling, who let you ride on his horse.' I could detect the quivering in the voice, which she tried to make so calm and soft to quiet the little fellow's fears. We took him out of the bath, and I went for leeches. While I was away, Mr. Morgan came. He loved the vicarage children as if he were their uncle; but he stood still and aghast at the sight of Walter,—so lately bright and strong,—and now hurrying alone to the awful change,—to the silent mysterious land, where, tended and cared for as he had been on earth, he must go—alone. The little fellow! the darling!

"We applied the leeches to his throat. He resisted at first; but Sophy, God bless her, put the agony of her grief on one side, and thought only of him, and began to sing the little songs he loved. We were all still. The gardener had gone to fetch the vicar; but he was twelve miles off, and we doubted if he would come in time. I don't know if they had any hope; but the first moment Mr. Morgan's eyes met mine, I saw that he, like me, had none. The ticking of the house-clock sounded through the dark quiet house. Walter was sleeping now, with the black leeches yet hanging to his *fair*, white throat. Still Sophy went on singing little

lullabies, which she had sung under far different and happier circumstances. I remember one verse, because it struck me at the time as strangely applicable.

'Sleep, baby, sleep!
Thy rest shall angels keep;
While on the grass the lamb shall feed,
And never suffer want or need.
Sleep, baby, sleep.'

The tears were in Mr. Morgan's eyes. I do not think either he or I could have spoken in our natural tones; but the brave girl went on clear though low. She stopped at last, and looked up.

"'He is better, is he not, Mr. Morgan?'

"'No, my dear. He is—ahem'—he could not speak all at once. Then he said—'My dear! he will be better soon. Think of your mamma, my dear Miss Sophy. She will be very thankful to have one of her darlings safe with her, where she is.'

"Still she did not cry. But she bent her head down on the little face, and kissed it long and tenderly.

"'I will go for Helen and Lizzie. They will be sorry not to see him again.' She rose up and went for them. Poor girls, they came in, in their dressing-gowns, with eyes dilated with sudden emotion, pale with terror, stealing softly along, as if sound could disturb him. Sophy comforted them by gentle caresses. It was over soon.

"Mr. Morgan was fairly crying like a child. But he thought it necessary to apologize to me, for what I honoured him for. 'I am a little overdone by yesterday's work, sir. I have had one or two bad nights, and they *rather upset* me. When I was your age I was as

strong and manly as any one, and would have scorned to shed tears.'

"Sophy came up to where we stood.

"'Mr. Morgan! I am so sorry for papa. How shall I tell him?' She was struggling against her own grief for her father's sake. Mr. Morgan offered to await his coming home; and she seemed thankful for the proposal. I, new friend, almost stranger, might stay no longer. The street was as quiet as ever; not a shadow was changed; for it was not yet four o'clock. But during the night a soul had departed.

"From all I could see, and all I could learn, the vicar and his daughter strove which should comfort the other the most. Each thought of the other's grief,—each prayed for the other rather than for themselves. We saw them walking out, countrywards; and we heard of them in the cottages of the poor. But it was some time before I happened to meet either of them again. And then I felt, from something indescribable in their manner towards me, that I was one of the

'Peculiar people, whom Death had made dear.'

That one day at the old hall had done this. I was, perhaps, the last person who had given the little fellow any unusual pleasure. Poor Walter! I wish I could have done more to make his short life happy!

CHAPTER VIII.

"THERE was a little lull, out of respect to the Vicar's grief, in the visiting. It gave time to Mrs. Rose to soften down the anguish of her weeds.

"At Christmas, Miss Tomkinson sent out invitations for a party. Miss Caroline had once or twice apologized to me because such an event had not taken place before; but, as she said, 'the avocations of their daily life prevented their having such little *réunions* except in the vacations.' And, sure enough, as soon as the holidays began, came the civil little note:

"'The Misses Tomkinson request the pleasure of Mrs. Rose's and Mr. Harrison's company at tea, on the evening of Monday, the 23rd inst. Tea at five o'clock."

"Mrs. Rose's spirit roused, like a war-horse at the sound of the trumpet, at this. She was not of a repining disposition, but I do think she believed the party-giving population of Duncombe had given up inviting her, as soon as she had determined to relent, and accept the invitations, in compliance with the late Mr. Rose's wishes.

"Such snippings of white love-ribbon as I found everywhere, making the carpet untidy! One day, too, unluckily, a small box was brought to me by mistake. I did not look at the direction, for I never doubted it was some hyoscyamus which I was expecting from London; so I tore it open, and saw inside a piece of paper, with 'No more gray hair,' in large letters, upon it. I folded it up in a hurry, and sealed it afresh, and

gave it to Mrs. Rose; but I could not refrain from asking her, soon after, if she could recommend me anything to keep my hair from turning gray, adding that I thought prevention was better than cure. I think she made out the impression of my seal on the paper after that; for I learned that she had been crying, and that she talked about there being no sympathy left in the world for her since Mr. Rose's death; and that she counted the days until she could rejoin him in the better world. I think she counted the days to Miss Tomkinson's party, too; she talked so much about it.

"The covers were taken off Miss Tomkinson's chairs, and curtains, and sofas; and a great jar full of artificial flowers was placed in the centre of the table, which, as Miss Caroline told me, was all her doing, as she doated on the beautiful and artistic in life. Miss Tomkinson stood, erect as a grenadier, close to the door, receiving her friends, and heartily shaking them by the hands as they entered: she said she was truly glad to see them. And so she really was.

"We had just finished tea, and Miss Caroline had brought out a little pack of conversation cards—sheaves of slips of card-board, with intellectual or sentimental questions on one set, and equally intellectual and sentimental answers on the other; and as the answers were fit to any and all the questions, you may think they were a characterless and 'wersh' set of things. I had just been asked by Miss Caroline,—

"'*Can you tell what those dearest to you think of you at this present time?*' and had answered,—

"'*How can you expect me to reveal such a secret to the present company!*' when the servant announced that a

gentleman, a friend of mine, wished to speak to me down-stairs.

"'Oh, show him up, Martha, show him up!' said Miss Tomkinson, in her hospitality.

"'Any friend of our friend's is welcome,' said Miss Caroline, in an insinuating tone.

"I jumped up, however, thinking it might be some one on business; but I was so penned in by the spider-legged tables, stuck out on every side, that I could not make the haste I wished; and before I could prevent it, Martha had shown up Jack Marshland, who was on his road home for a day or two at Christmas.

"He came up in a hearty way, bowing to Miss Tomkinson, and explaining that he had found himself in my neighbourhood, and had come over to pass a night with me, and that my servant had directed him where I was.

"His voice, loud at all times, sounded like Stentor's, in that little room, where we all spoke in a kind of purring way. He had no swell in his tones; they were *forte* from the beginning. At first it seemed like the days of my youth come back again, to hear full manly speaking; I felt proud of my friend, as he thanked Miss Tomkinson for her kindness in asking him to stay the evening. By-and-by he came up to me, and I dare say he thought he had lowered his voice, for he looked as if speaking confidentially, while in fact the whole room might have heard him.

"'Frank, my boy, when shall we have dinner at this good old lady's? I'm deuced hungry.'

"Dinner! Why, we had had tea an hour ago. While he yet spoke, Martha came in with a little tray, on which was a single cup of coffee and three slices of wafer bread-

and-butter. His dismay, and his evident submission to the decrees of Fate, tickled me so much, that I thought he should have a further taste of the life I led from month's end to month's end, and I gave up my plan of taking him home at once, and enjoyed the anticipation of the hearty laugh we should have together at the end of the evening. I was famously punished for my determination.

"'Shall we continue our game?' asked Miss Caroline, who had never relinquished her sheaf of questions.

"We went on questioning and answering, with little gain of information to either party.

"'No such thing as heavy betting in this game, eh, Frank?' asked Jack, who had been watching us. 'You don't lose ten pounds at a sitting, I guess, as you used to do at Short's. Playing for love, I suppose you call it.'

"Miss Caroline simpered, and looked down. Jack was not thinking of her. He was thinking of the days we had had at the Mermaid. Suddenly he said, 'Where were you this day last year, Frank?'

"'I don't remember!' said I.

"'Then I'll tell you. It's the 23rd—the day you were taken up for knocking down the fellow in Long-acre, and that I had to bail you out ready for Christmas-day. You are in more agreeable quarters to-night.'

"He did not intend this reminiscence to be heard, but was not in the least put out when Miss Tomkinson, with a face of dire surprise, asked,—

"'Mr. Harrison taken up, sir?'

"'Oh, yes, ma'am; and you see it was so common an affair with him to be locked up that he can't remember *the* dates of his different imprisonments.'

"He laughed heartily; and so should I, but that I saw the impression it made. The thing was, in fact, simple enough, and capable of easy explanation. I had been made angry by seeing a great hulking fellow, out of mere wantonness, break the crutch from under a cripple; and I struck the man more violently than I intended, and down he went, yelling out for the police, and I had to go before the magistrate to be released. I disdained giving this explanation at the time. It was no business of theirs what I had been doing a year ago; but still Jack might have held his tongue. However, that unruly member of his was set a-going, and he told me afterwards he was resolved to let the old ladies into a little of life; and accordingly he remembered every practical joke we had ever had, and talked and laughed, and roared again. I tried to converse with Miss Caroline—Mrs. Munton—any one; but Jack was the hero of the evening, and every one was listening to him.

"'Then he has never sent any hoaxing letters since he came here, has he? Good boy! He has turned over a new leaf. He was the deepest dog at that I ever met with. Such anonymous letters as he used to send! Do you remember that to Mrs. Walbrook, eh, Frank? That was too bad!' (the wretch was laughing all the time.) 'No; I won't tell about it—don't be afraid. Such a shameful hoax!' (laughing again).

"'Pray do tell,' I called out; for he made it seem far worse than it was.

"'Oh no, no; you've established a better character—I would not for the world nip your budding efforts. We'll bury the past in oblivion.'

I tried to tell my neighbours the story to which he

alluded; but they were attracted by the merriment of Jack's manner, and did not care to hear the plain matter of fact.

"Then came a pause; Jack was talking almost quietly to Miss Horsman. Suddenly he called across the room —'How many times have you been out with the hounds? The hedges were blind very late this year, but you must have had some good mild days since.'

"'I have never been out,' said I, shortly.

"'Never!—whew——! Why, I thought that was the great attraction to Duncombe.'

"Now was not he provoking? He would condole with me, and fixed the subject in the minds of every one present.

"The supper trays were brought in, and there was a shuffling of situations. He and I were close together again.

"'I say, Frank, what will you lay me that I don't clear that tray before people are ready for their second helping? I'm as hungry as a hound.'

"'You shall have a round of beef and a raw leg of mutton when you get home. Only do behave yourself here.'

"'Well, for your sake; but keep me away from those trays, or I'll not answer for myself. "Hould me, or I'll fight," as the Irishman said. I'll go and talk to that little old lady in blue, and sit with my back to those ghosts of eatables.'

"He sat down by Miss Caroline, who would not have liked his description of her; and began an earnest, tolerably quiet conversation. I tried to be as agreeable *as I could*, to do away with the impression he had given

of me; but I found that every one drew up a little stiffly at my approach, and did not encourage me to make any remarks.

"In the middle of my attempts, I heard Miss Caroline beg Jack to take a glass of wine, and I saw him help himself to what appeared to be port; but in an instant he set it down from his lips, exclaiming, 'Vinegar, by Jove!' He made the most horribly wry face; and Miss Tomkinson came up in a severe hurry to investigate the affair. It turned out it was some black currant wine, on which she particularly piqued herself; I drank two glasses of it to ingratiate myself with her, and can testify to its sourness. I don't think she noticed my exertions, she was so much engrossed in listening to Jack's excuses for his *mal-àpropos* observation. He told her with the gravest face that he had been a tee-totaller so long that he had but a confused recollection of the distinction between wine and vinegar, particularly eschewing the latter, because it had been twice fermented; and that he had imagined Miss Caroline had asked him to take toast-and-water, or he should never have touched the decanter.

CHAPTER IX.

"As we were walking home, Jack said, 'Lord, Frank! I've had such fun with the little lady in blue. I told her you wrote to me every Saturday, telling me the events *of the week*. She took all in.' He stopped to

laugh; for he bubbled and chuckled so that he could not laugh and walk. 'And I told her you were deeply in love,' (another laugh); 'and that I could not get you to tell me the name of the lady, but that she had light brown hair,—in short, I drew from life, and gave her an exact description of herself; and that I was most anxious to see her, and implore her to be merciful to you, for that you were a most timid, faint-hearted fellow with women.' He laughed till I thought he would have fallen down. 'I begged her, if she could guess who it was from my description—I'll answer for it she did—I took care of that; for I said you described a mole on the left cheek, in the most poetical way, saying Venus had pinched it out of envy at seeing any one more lovely—oh, hold me up, or I shall fall—laughing and hunger make me so weak;—well, I say, I begged her, if she knew who your fair one could be, to implore her to save you. I said I knew one of your lungs had gone after a former unfortunate love-affair, and that I could not answer for the other if the lady here were cruel. She spoke of a respirator; but I told her that might do very well for the odd lung; but would it minister to a heart diseased? I really did talk fine;—I have found out the secret of eloquence—it's believing what you've got to say; and I worked myself well up with fancying you married to the little lady in blue.'

"I got to laughing at last, angry as I had been; his impudence was irresistible. Mrs. Rose had come home in the sedan, and gone to bed; and he and I sat up over the round of beef and brandy-and-water till two o'clock in the morning.

"He told me I had got quite into the professional

way of mousing about a room, and mewing and purring according as my patients were ill or well. He mimicked me, and made me laugh at myself. He left early the next morning.

"Mr. Morgan came at his usual hour; he and Marshland would never have agreed, and I should have been uncomfortable to see two friends of mine disliking and despising each other.

"Mr. Morgan was ruffled; but with his deferential manner to women, he smoothed himself down before Mrs. Rose,—regretted that he had not been able to come to Miss Tomkinson's the evening before, and consequently had not seen her in the society she was so well calculated to adorn. But when we were by ourselves, he said,—

"'I was sent for to Mrs. Munton's this morning—the old spasms. May I ask what is this story she tells me about,—about prison, in fact? I trust, sir, she has made some little mistake, and that you never were——; that it is an unfounded report.' He could not get it out,—'that you were in Newgate for three months!' I burst out laughing; the story had grown like a mushroom indeed. Mr. Morgan looked grave. I told him the truth. Still he looked grave. 'I've no doubt, sir, that you acted rightly; but it has an awkward sound. I imagined from your hilarity just now that there was no foundation whatever for the story. Unfortunately there is.'

"'I was only a night at the police-station. I would go there again for the same cause, sir.'

"'Very fine spirit, sir,—quite like Don Quixote; but don't you see you might as well have been to the hulks at once?"

"'No, sir; I don't.'

"'Take my word, before long, the story will have grown to that. However, we won't anticipate evil. *Mens conscia recti*, you remember, is the great thing. The part I regret is, that it may require some short time to overcome a little prejudice which the story may excite against you. However, we won't dwell on it. *Mens conscia recti!* Don't think about it, sir.'

"It was clear he was thinking a good deal about it.

CHAPTER X.

"Two or three days before this time, I had had an invitation from the Bullocks to dine with them on Christmas-day. Mrs. Rose was going to spend the week with friends in the town where she formerly lived; and I had been pleased at the notion of being received into a family, and of being a little with Mr. Bullock, who struck me as a bluff good-hearted fellow.

"But this Tuesday before Christmas-day, there came an invitation from the vicar to dine there; there were to be only their own family and Mr. Morgan. 'Only their own family.' It was getting to be all the world to me. I was in a passion with myself for having been so ready to accept Mr. Bullock's invitation,—coarse and ungentlemanly as he was; with his wife's airs of pretension, and Miss Bullock's stupidity. I turned it over in my mind. No! I could not have a bad headache, which should prevent me going to the place I did not care for,

and yet leave me at liberty to go where I wished. All I could do was to join the vicarage girls after church, and walk by their side in a long country ramble. They were quiet; not sad, exactly; but it was evident that the thought of Walter was in their minds on this day. We went through a copse where there were a good number of evergreens planted as covers for game. The snow was on the ground; but the sky was clear and bright, and the sun glittered on the smooth holly-leaves. Lizzie asked me to gather her some of the very bright red berries, and she was beginning a sentence with,—

"'Do you remember——,' when Ellen said '*Hush*,' and looked towards Sophy, who was walking a little apart, and crying softly to herself. There was evidently some connection between Walter and the holly-berries, for Lizzie threw them away at once when she saw Sophy's tears. Soon we came to a stile which led to an open breezy common, half-covered with gorse. I helped the little girls over it, and set them to run down the slope; but I took Sophy's arm in mine, and though I could not speak, I think she knew how I was feeling for her. I could hardly bear to bid her good-by at the vicarage gate; it seemed as if I ought to go in and spend the day with her.

CHAPTER XI.

"I VENTED my ill-humour in being late for the Bullocks' dinner. There were one or two clerks, towards whom Mr. Bullock was patronising and pressing. Mrs. Bul-

lock was decked out in extraordinary finery. Miss Bullock looked plainer than ever; but she had on some old gown or other, I think, for I heard Mrs. Bullock tell her she was always making a figure of herself. I began to-day to suspect that the mother would not be sorry if I took a fancy to the step-daughter. I was again placed near her at dinner, and when the little ones came in to dessert, I was made to notice how fond of children she was, and indeed when one of them nestled to her, her face did brighten; but the moment she caught this loud-whispered remark, the gloom came back again, with something even of anger in her look; and she was quite sullen and obstinate when urged to sing in the drawing-room. Mrs. Bullock turned to me—

"'Some young ladies won't sing unless they are asked by gentlemen.' She spoke very crossly. 'If you ask Jemima, she will probably sing. To oblige me, it is evident she will not.'

"I thought the singing, when we got it, would probably be a great bore; however, I did as I was bid, and went with my request to the young lady, who was sitting a little apart. She looked up at me with eyes full of tears, and said, in a decided tone (which, if I had not seen her eyes, I should have said was as cross as her mamma's), 'No, sir, I will not.' She got up, and left the room. I expected to hear Mrs. Bullock abuse her for her obstinacy. Instead of that, she began to tell me of the money that had been spent on her education; of what each separate accomplishment had cost. 'She was timid,' she said, 'but very musical. Wherever her future home might be, there would be no want of music.' *She went* on praising her till I hated her. If they

thought I was going to marry that great lubberly girl, they were mistaken. Mr. Bullock and the clerks came up. He brought out Liebig, and called me to him.

"'I can understand a good deal of this agricultural chemistry,' said he, 'and have put it in practice—without much success, hitherto, I confess. But these unconnected letters puzzle me a little. I suppose they have some meaning, or else I should say it was mere book-making to put them in.'

"'I think they give the page a very ragged appearance,' said Mrs. Bullock, who had joined us. 'I inherit a little of my late father's taste for books, and must say I like to see a good type, a broad margin, and an elegant binding. My father despised variety; how he would have held up his hands aghast at the cheap literature of these times! He did not require many books, but he would have twenty editions of those that he had; and he paid more for binding than he did for the books themselves. But elegance was everything with him. He would not have admitted your Liebig, Mr. Bullock; neither the nature of the subject, nor the common type, nor the common way in which your book is got up, would have suited him.'

"'Go and make tea, my dear, and leave Mr. Harrison and me to talk over a few of these manures.'

"We settled to it; I explained the meaning of the symbols, and the doctrine of chemical equivalents. At last he said, 'Doctor! you're giving me too strong a dose of it at one time. Let's have a small quantity taken "hodie;" that's professional, as Mr. Morgan would call it. Come in and call when you have leisure, and give *me a lesson* in my alphabet. Of all you've been

telling me I can only remember that C means carbon and O oxygen; and I see one must know the meaning of all these confounded letters before one can do much good with Liebig.

"'We dine at three,' said Mrs. Bullock. 'There will always be a knife and fork for Mr. Harrison. Bullock! don't confine your invitation to the evening!'

"'Why, you see, I've a nap always after dinner, so I could not be learning chemistry then.'

"'Don't be so selfish, Mr. B. Think of the pleasure Jemima and I shall have in Mr. Harrison's society.'

"I put a stop to the discussion by saying I would come in in the evenings occasionally, and give Mr. Bullock a lesson, but that my professional duties occupied me invariably until that time.

"I liked Mr. Bullock. He was simple, and shrewd; and to be with a man was a relief, after all the feminine society I went through every day.

CHAPTER XII.

"The next morning I met Miss Horsman.

"'So you dined at Mr. Bullock's yesterday, Mr. Harrison? Quite a family party, I hear. They are quite charmed with you, and your knowledge of chemistry. Mr. Bullock told me so, in Hodgson's shop, just now. Miss Bullock is a nice girl, eh, Mr. Harrison?' She looked sharply at me. Of course, whatever I thought, *I could* do nothing but assent. 'A nice little fortune,

too,—three thousand pounds, Consols, from her own mother.'

"What did I care? She might have three millions for me. I had begun to think a good deal about money, though, but not in connection with her. I had been doing up our books ready to send out our Christmas bills, and had been wondering how far the vicar would consider three hundred a year, with a prospect of increase, would justify me in thinking of Sophy. Think of her I could not help; and the more I thought of how good, and sweet, and pretty she was, the more I felt that she ought to have far more than I could offer. Besides my father was a shopkeeper, and I saw the vicar had a sort of respect for family. I determined to try and be very attentive to my profession. I was as civil as could be to every one; and wore the nap off the brim of my hat by taking it off so often.

"I had my eyes open to every glimpse of Sophy. I am overstocked with gloves now that I bought at that time, by way of making errands into the shops where I saw her black gown. I bought pounds upon pounds of arrow-root, till I was tired of the eternal arrow-root puddings Mrs. Rose gave me. I asked her if she could not make bread of it, but she seemed to think that would be expensive; so I took to soap as a safe purchase. I believe soap improves by keeping.

CHAPTER XIII.

"The more I knew of Mrs. Rose, the better I liked her. She was sweet, and kind, and motherly, and we never had any rubs. I hurt her once or twice, I think, by cutting her short in her long stories about Mr. Rose. But I found out that when she had plenty to do she did not think of him quite so much; so I expressed a wish for Corazza shirts, and in the puzzle of devising how they were to be cut out, she forgot Mr. Rose for some time. I was still more pleased by her way about some legacy her elder brother left her. I don't know the amount, but it was something handsome, and she might have set up housekeeping for herself: but, instead, she told Mr. Morgan (who repeated it to me), that she should continue with me, as she had quite an elder sister's interest in me.

"The 'country young lady,' Miss Tyrrell, returned to Miss Tomkinson's after the holidays. She had an enlargement of the tonsils, which required to be frequently touched with caustic, so I often called to see her. Miss Caroline always received me, and kept me talking in her washed-out style, after I had seen my patient. One day she told me she thought she had a weakness about the heart, and would be glad if I would bring my stethoscope the next time, which I accordingly did; and while I was on my knees listening to the pulsations, one of the young ladies came in. She said:

"Oh dear! I never! I beg your pardon, ma'am,' and scuttled out. There was not much the matter with Miss Caroline's heart; a little feeble in action or so, a

mere matter of weakness and general languor. When I went down I saw two or three of the girls peeping out of the half-closed school-room door, but they shut it immediately, and I heard them laughing. The next time I called, Miss Tomkinson was sitting in state to receive me.

" 'Miss Tyrrell's throat does not seem to make much progress. Do you understand the case, Mr. Harrison—or should we have further advice? I think Mr. Morgan would probably know more about it.'

"I assured her it was the simplest thing in the world; that it always implied a little torpor in the constitution, and that we preferred working through the system, which of course was a slow process, and that the medicine the young lady was taking (iodide of iron) was sure to be successful, although the progress would not be rapid. She bent her head, and said, 'It might be so; but she confessed she had more confidence in medicines which had some effect.'

" She seemed to expect me to tell her something; but I had nothing to say, and accordingly I bade good-by. Somehow Miss Tomkinson always managed to make me feel very small, by a succession of snubbings; and whenever I left her I had always to comfort myself under her contradictions by saying to myself, 'Her saying it is so, does not make it so.' Or I invented good retorts which I might have made to her brusque speeches if I had but thought of them at the right time. But it was provoking that I had not had the presence of mind to recollect them just when they were wanted.

CHAPTER XIV.

"On the whole, things went on smoothly. Mr. Holden's legacy came in just about this time; and I felt quite rich. Five hundred pounds would furnish the house, I thought, when Mrs. Rose left and Sophy came. I was delighted, too, to imagine that Sophy perceived the difference of my manner to her from what it was to any one else, and that she was embarrassed and shy in consequence, but not displeased with me for it. All was so flourishing that I went about on wings instead of feet. We were very busy, without having anxious cares. My legacy was paid into Mr. Bullock's hands, who united a little banking business to his profession of law. In return for his advice about investments (which I never meant to take, having a more charming, if less profitable, mode in my head), I went pretty frequently to teach him his agricultural chemistry. I was so happy in Sophy's blushes that I was universally benevolent, and desirous of giving pleasure to every one. I went, at Mrs. Bullock's general invitation, to dinner there one day unexpectedly; but there was such a fuss of ill-concealed preparation consequent upon my coming, that I never went again. Her little boy came in, with an audibly given message from the cook, to ask—

"'If this was the gentleman as she was to send in the best dinner-service and dessert for?'

"I looked deaf, but determined never to go again.

"Miss Bullock and I, meanwhile, became rather *friendly*. We found out that we mutually disliked each

other; and were contented with the discovery. If people are worth anything, this sort of non-liking is a very good beginning of friendship. Every good quality is revealed naturally and slowly, and is a pleasant surprise. I found out that Miss Bullock was sensible, and even sweet-tempered, when not irritated by her stepmother's endeavours to show her off. But she would sulk for hours after Mrs. Bullock's offensive praise of her good points. And I never saw such a black passion as she went into when she suddenly came into the room when Mrs. Bullock was telling me of all the offers she had had.

"My legacy made me feel up to extravagance. I scoured the country for a glorious nosegay of camellias, which I sent to Sophy on Valentine's day. I durst not add a line, but I wished the flowers could speak, and tell her how I loved her.

"I called on Miss Tyrrell that day. Miss Caroline was more simpering and affected than ever; and full of allusions to the day.

"'Do you affix much sincerity of meaning to the little gallantries of this day, Mr. Harrison?' asked she in a languishing tone. I thought of my camellias, and how my heart had gone with them into Sophy's keeping; and I told her I thought one might often take advantage of such a time to hint at feelings one dared not fully express.

"I remembered afterwards the forced display she made, after Miss Tyrrell left the room, of a valentine. But I took no notice at the time; my head was full of Sophy.

"It *was on that* very day that John Brouncker, the

gardener to all of us who had small gardens to keep in order, fell down and injured his wrist severely (I don't give you the details of the case, because they would not interest you, being too technical; if you've any curiosity, you will find them in the *Lancet* of August in that year.) We all liked John, and this accident was felt like a town's misfortune. The gardens, too, just wanted doing up. Both Mr. Morgan and I went directly to him. It was a very awkward case, and his wife and children were crying sadly. He himself was in great distress at being thrown out of work. He begged us to do something that would cure him speedily, as he could not afford to be laid up, with six children depending on him for bread. We did not say much before him, but we both thought the arm would have to come off, and it was his right arm. We talked it over when we came out of the cottage. Mr. Morgan had no doubt of the necessity. I went back at dinner-time to see the poor fellow. He was feverish and anxious. He had caught up some expression of Mr. Morgan's in the morning, and had guessed the measure we had in contemplation. He bade his wife leave the room, and spoke to me by myself.

"'If you please, sir, I'd rather be done for at once than have my arm taken off, and be a burden to my family. I'm not afraid of dying, but I could not stand being a cripple for life, eating bread, and not able to earn it.'

"The tears were in his eyes with earnestness. I had all along been more doubtful about the necessity of the amputation than Mr. Morgan. I knew the improved treatment in such cases. In his days there was much

more of the rough and ready in surgical practice; so I gave the poor fellow some hope.

"In the afternoon I met Mr. Bullock.

"'So you're to try your hand at an amputation to-morrow, I hear. Poor John Brouncker! I used to tell him he was not careful enough about his ladders. Mr. Morgan is quite excited about it. He asked me to be present, and see how well a man from Guy's could operate; he says he is sure you'll do it beautifully. Pah! no such sights for me, thank you.'

"Ruddy Mr. Bullock went a shade or two paler at the thought.

"'Curious! how professionally a man views these things. Here's Mr. Morgan, who has been all along as proud of you as if you were his own son, absolutely rubbing his hands at the idea of this crowning glory, this feather in your cap! He told me just now he knew he had always been too nervous to be a good operator; and had therefore preferred sending for White from Chesterton. But now any one might have a serious accident who liked, for you would be always at hand.'

"I told Mr. Bullock, I really thought we might avoid the amputation; but his mind was pre-occupied with the idea of it, and he did not care to listen to me. The whole town was full of it. That is a charm in a little town, everybody is so sympathetically full of the same events. Even Miss Horsman stopped me to ask after John Brouncker with interest; but she threw cold water upon my intention of saving the arm.

"'As for the wife and family, we'll take care of them. Think what a fine opportunity you have of showing off, Mr. Harrison!'

"That was just like her. Always ready with her suggestions of ill-natured or interested motives.

"Mr. Morgan heard my proposal of a mode of treatment by which I thought it possible that the arm might be saved.

"'I differ from you, Mr. Harrison,' said he. 'I regret it, but I differ *in toto* from you. Your kind heart deceives you in this instance. There is no doubt that amputation must take place—not later than to-morrow morning, I should say. I have made myself at liberty to attend upon you, sir; I shall be happy to officiate as your assistant. Time was when I should have been proud to be principal, but a little trembling in my arm incapacitates me.'

"I urged my reasons upon him again; but he was obstinate. He had, in fact, boasted so much of my acquirements as an operator, that he was unwilling I should lose this opportunity of displaying my skill. He could not see that there would be greater skill evinced in saving the arm; nor did I think of this at the time. I grew angry at his old-fashioned narrow-mindedness, as I thought it; and I became dogged in my resolution to adhere to my own course. We parted very coolly; and I went straight off to John Brouncker to tell him I believed that I could save the arm, if he would refuse to have it amputated. When I calmed myself a little, before going in and speaking to him, I could not help acknowledging that we should run some risk of locked jaw; but, on the whole, and after giving most earnest conscientious thought to the case, I was sure that my mode of treatment would be best.

"He was a sensible man. I told him the difference

of opinion that existed between Mr. Morgan and myself. I said that there might be some little risk attending the non-amputation; but that I should guard against it, and I trusted that I should be able to preserve his arm.

"'Under God's blessing,' said he, reverently. I bowed my head. I don't like to talk too frequently of the dependence which I always felt on that holy blessing, as to the result of my efforts; but I was glad to hear that speech of John's, because it showed a calm and faithful heart; and I had almost certain hopes of him from that time.

"We agreed that he should tell Mr. Morgan the reason of his objections to the amputation, and his reliance on my opinion. I determined to recur to every book I had relating to such cases, and to convince Mr. Morgan, if I could, of my wisdom. Unluckily, I found out afterwards that he had met Miss Horsman in the time that intervened before I saw him again at his own house that evening; and she had more than hinted that I shrunk from performing the operation, 'for very good reasons, no doubt. She had heard that the medical students in London were a bad set, and were not remarkable for regular attendance in the hospitals. She might be mistaken; but she thought it was, perhaps, quite as well poor John Brouncker had not his arm cut off by——. Was there not such a thing as mortification coming on after a clumsy operation? It was, perhaps, only a choice of deaths!'

"Mr. Morgan had been stung at all this. Perhaps I did not speak quite respectfully enough; I was a good deal excited. We only got more and more angry with each other; *though* he, to do him justice, was as civil

as could be all the time, thinking that thereby he concealed his vexation and disappointment. He did not try to conceal his anxiety about poor John. I went home weary and dispirited. I made up and took the necessary applications to John; and, promising to return with the dawn of day (I would fain have stayed, but I did not wish him to be alarmed about himself), I went home, and resolved to sit up and study the treatment of similar cases.

"Mrs. Rose knocked at the door.

"'Come in!' said I, sharply.

"She said she had seen I had something on my mind all day, and she could not go to bed without asking if there was nothing she could do. She was good and kind; and I could not help telling her a little of the truth. She listened pleasantly; and I shook her warmly by the hand, thinking that though she might not be very wise, her good heart made her worth a dozen keen, sharp, hard people, like Miss Horsman.

"When I went at daybreak, I saw John's wife for a few minutes outside of the door. She seemed to wish her husband had been in Mr. Morgan's hands rather than mine; but she gave me as good an account as I dared to hope for of the manner in which her husband had passed the night. This was confirmed by my own examination.

"When Mr. Morgan and I visited him together later on in the day, John said what we had agreed upon the day before; and I told Mr. Morgan openly that it was by my advice that amputation was declined. He did not speak to me till we had left the house. Then he said—'*Now*, sir, from this time, I consider this case entirely

in your hands. Only remember the poor fellow has a wife and six children. In case you come round to my opinion, remember that Mr. White could come over, as he has done before, for the operation.'

"So! Mr. Morgan believed I declined operating because I felt myself incapable.—Very well!—I was much mortified.

"An hour after we parted, I received a note to this effect—

"DEAR SIR,—I will take the long round to-day, to leave you at liberty to attend to Brouncker's case, which I feel to be a very responsible one.

"'J. MORGAN.'

"This was kindly done. I went back, as soon as I could, to John's cottage. While I was in the inner room with him, I heard the Miss Tomkinsons' voices outside. They had called to inquire. Miss Tomkinson came in, and evidently was poking and snuffing about. (Mrs. Brouncker told her that I was within; and within I resolved to be till they had gone.)

"'What is this close smell?' asked she. 'I am afraid you are not cleanly. Cheese!—cheese in this cupboard! No wonder there is an unpleasant smell. Don't you know how particular you should be about being clean when there is illness about?'

"Mrs. Brouncker was exquisitely clean in general, and was piqued at these remarks.

"'If you please, ma'am, I could not leave John yesterday to do any house-work, and Jenny put the dinner-things away. She is but eight years old.'

"But this did not satisfy Miss Tomkinson, who was evidently pursuing the course of her observations.

"'Fresh butter, I declare! Well now, Mrs. Brouncker, do you know I don't allow myself fresh butter at this time of the year? How can you save, indeed, with such extravagance!'

"'Please, ma'am,' answered Mrs. Brouncker, 'you'd think it strange, if I was to take such liberties in your house as you're taking here.'

"I expected to hear a sharp answer. No! Miss Tomkinson liked true plain-speaking. The only person in whom she would tolerate round-about ways of talking was her sister.

"'Well, that's true,' she said. 'Still, you must not be above taking advice. Fresh butter is extravagant at this time of the year. However, you're a good kind of woman, and I've a great respect for John. Send Jenny for some broth as soon as he can take it. Come, Caroline, we have got to go on to Williams's.'

"But Miss Caroline said that she was tired, and would rest where she was till Miss Tomkinson came back. I was a prisoner for some time, I found. When she was alone with Mrs. Brouncker, she said,—

"'You must not be hurt by my sister's abrupt manner. She means well. She has not much imagination or sympathy, and cannot understand the distraction of mind produced by the illness of a worshipped husband.' I could hear the loud sigh of commiseration which followed this speech. Mrs. Brouncker said,—

"'Please, ma'am, I don't worship my husband. I would not be so wicked.'

"'Goodness!—You don't think it wicked, do you? For my part, if . . . . . I should worship, I should

adore him.' I thought she need not imagine such improbable cases. But sturdy Mrs. Brouncker said again,—

"'I hope I know my duty better. I've not learned my Commandments for nothing. I know whom I ought to worship.'

"Just then the children came in, dirty and unwashed, I have no doubt. And now Miss Caroline's real nature peeped out. She spoke sharply to them, and asked them if they had no manners, little pigs as they were, to come brushing against her silk gown in that way? She sweetened herself again, and was as sugary as love when Miss Tomkinson returned for her, accompanied by one whose voice, 'like winds in summer sighing,' I knew to be my dear Sophy's.

"She did not say much; but what she did say, and the manner in which she spoke, was tender and compassionate in the highest degree; and she came to take the four little ones back with her to the Vicarage, in order that they might be out of their mother's way; the older two might help at home. She offered to wash their hands and faces; and when I emerged from my inner chamber, after the Miss Tomkinsons had left, I found her with a chubby child on her knees, bubbling and spluttering against her white wet hand, with a face bright, rosy, and merry under the operation. Just as I came in, she said to him, 'There, Jemmy, now I can kiss you with this nice clean face.'

"She coloured when she saw me. I liked her speaking, and I liked her silence. She was silent now, and I 'lo'ed a' the better.' I gave my directions to Mrs. Brouncker, and hastened to overtake Sophy and the

children; but they had gone round by the lanes, I suppose, for I saw nothing of them.

"I was very anxious about the case. At night I went again. Miss Horsman had been there; I believe she was really kind among the poor, but she could not help leaving a sting behind her everywhere. She had been frightening Mrs. Brouncker about her husband; and been, I have no doubt, expressing her doubts of my skill; for Mrs. Brouncker began:

"'Oh, please, sir, if you'll only let Mr. Morgan take off his arm. I will never think the worse of you for not being able to do it.'

"I told her it was from no doubt of my own competency to perform the operation that I wished to save the arm; but that he himself was anxious to have it spared.

"'Ay, bless him! he frets about not earning enough to keep us, if he's crippled; but, sir, I don't care about that. I would work my fingers to the bone, and so would the children; I'm sure we'd be proud to do for him, and keep him; God bless him! it would be far better to have him only with one arm, than to have him in the churchyard, Miss Horsman says'——

"'Confound Miss Horsman!' said I.

"'Thank you, Mr. Harrison,' said her well-known voice behind me. She had come out, dark as it was, to bring some old linen to Mrs. Brouncker; for, as I said before, she was very kind to all the poor people of Duncombe.

"'I beg your pardon;' for I really was sorry for my speech, or rather, that she had heard it.

"'There is no occasion for any apology,' she replied,

drawing herself up, and pinching her lips into a very venomous shape.

"John was doing pretty well; but of course the danger of locked jaw was not over. Before I left, his wife entreated me to take off the arm; she wrung her hands in her passionate entreaty. 'Spare him to me, Mr. Harrison,' she implored. Miss Horsman stood by. It was mortifying enough; but I thought of the power which was in my hands, as I firmly believed, of saving the limb; and I was inflexible.

"You cannot think how pleasantly Mrs. Rose's sympathy came in on my return. To be sure she did not understand one word of the case, which I detailed to her; but she listened with interest, and, as long as she held her tongue, I thought she was really taking it in; but her first remark was as *mal-àpropos* as could be.

"'You are anxious to save the tibia—I see completely how difficult that will be. My late husband had a case exactly similar, and I remember his anxiety; but you must not distress yourself too much, my dear Mr. Harrison; I have no doubt it will end well.'

"I knew she had no grounds for this assurance, and yet it comforted me.

"However, as it happened, John did fully as well as I could hope; of course he was long in rallying his strength; and, indeed, sea-air was evidently so necessary for his complete restoration, that I accepted with gratitude Mrs. Rose's proposal of sending him to Highport for a fortnight or three weeks. Her kind generosity in this matter made me more desirous than ever of paying her every mark of respect and attention.

CHAPTER XV.

"About this time there was a sale at Ashmeadow, a pretty house in the neighbourhood of Duncombe. It was likewise an easy walk, and the spring days tempted many people thither, who had no intention of buying anything, but who liked the idea of rambling through the woods, gay with early primroses and wild daffodils, and of seeing the gardens and house, which till now had been shut up from the ingress of the townspeople. Mrs. Rose had planned to go, but an unlucky cold prevented her. She begged me to bring her a very particular account, saying she delighted in details, and always questioned the late Mr. Rose as to the side dishes of the dinners to which he went. The late Mr. Rose's conduct was always held up as a model to me, by the way. I walked to Ashmeadow, pausing, or loitering with different parties of towns-people, all bound in the same direction. At last I found the vicar and Sophy, and with them I stayed. I sat by Sophy, and talked and listened. A sale is a very pleasant gathering after all. The auctioneer, in a country place, is privileged to joke from his rostrum; and having a personal knowledge of most of the people, can sometimes make a very keen hit at their circumstances, and turn the laugh against them. For instance, on the present occasion, there was a farmer present, with his wife, who was notoriously the grey mare. The auctioneer was selling some horse-cloths, and called out to recommend the article to her, telling her, with a knowing look at the company, that they would make her a dashing pair of trousers, if she *was in* want of such an article. She drew herself up

with dignity, and said, 'Come, John, we've had enough of these.' Whereupon there was a burst of laughter, and in the midst of it John meekly followed his wife out of the place. The furniture in the sitting-rooms was, I believe, very beautiful, but I did not notice it much. Suddenly I heard the auctioneer speaking to me, 'Mr. Harrison, won't you give me a bid for this table?'

"It was a very pretty little table of walnut-wood. I thought it would go into my study very well, so I gave him a bid. I saw Miss Horsman bidding against me, so I went off with full force, and at last it was knocked down to me. The auctioneer smiled, and congratulated me.

"'A most useful present for Mrs. Harrison, when that lady comes.'

"Everybody laughed. They like a joke about marriage, it is so easy of comprehension. But the table which I had thought was for writing, turned out to be a work-table, scissors and thimble complete. No wonder I looked foolish. Sophy was not looking at me, that was one comfort. She was busy arranging a nosegay of wood-anemone and wild sorrel.

"Miss Horsman came up, with her curious eyes.

"'I had no idea things were far enough advanced for you to be purchasing a work-table, Mr. Harrison.'

"I laughed off my awkwardness.

"'Did not you, Miss Horsman? You are very much behindhand. You have not heard of my piano, then?'

"'No, indeed,' said she, half uncertain whether I was serious or not. 'Then it seems there is nothing wanting but the lady.'

"'Perhaps she may not be wanting either,' said I, for I wished to perplex her keen curiosity.

CHAPTER XVI.

"When I got home from my round, I found Mrs. Rose in some sorrow.

"'Miss Horsman called after you left,' said she. 'Have you heard how John Brouncker is at Highport?'

"'Very well,' replied I. 'I called on his wife just now, and she had just got a letter from him. She had been anxious about him, for she had not heard for a week. However, all's right now; and she has pretty well of work at Mrs. Munton's, as her servant is ill. Oh, they'll do, never fear.'

"'At Mrs. Munton's? Oh, that accounts for it, then. She is so deaf, and makes such blunders.'

"'Accounts for what?' asked I.

"'Oh, perhaps I had better not tell you,' hesitated Mrs. Rose.

"'Yes, tell me at once. I beg your pardon, but I hate mysteries.'

"'You are so like my poor dear Mr. Rose. He used to speak to me just in that sharp, cross way.—It is only that Miss Horsman called. She had been making a collection for John Brouncker's widow, and'—

"'But the man's alive!' said I.

"'So it seems. But Mrs. Munton had told her that he was dead. And she has got Mr. Morgan's name down at the head of the list, and Mr. Bullock's'—

"Mr. Morgan and I had got into a short, cool way of speaking to each other ever since we had differed so much about the treatment of Brouncker's arm; and I *had* heard once or twice of his shakes of the head over

John's case. He would not have spoken against my method for the world, and fancied that he concealed his fears.

"'Miss Horsman is very ill-natured, I think,' sighed forth Mrs. Rose.

"I saw that something had been said of which I had not heard, for the mere fact of collecting money for the widow was good-natured, whoever did it; so I asked quietly what she had said.

"'Oh, I don't know if I should tell you. I only know she made me cry; for I'm not well, and I can't bear to hear any one that I live with abused.'

"Come! this was pretty plain.

"'What did Miss Horsman say of me?' asked I, half laughing, for I knew there was no love lost between us.

"'Oh, she only said she wondered you could go to sales, and spend your money there, when your ignorance had made Jane Brouncker a widow, and her children fatherless.'

"'Pooh! pooh! John's alive, and likely to live as long as you or I, thanks to you, Mrs. Rose.'

"When my work-table came home, Mrs. Rose was so struck with its beauty and completeness, and I was so much obliged to her for her identification of my interests with hers, and the kindness of her whole conduct about John, that I begged her to accept of it. She seemed very much pleased; and, after a few apologies, she consented to take it, and placed it in the most conspicuous part of the front parlour, where she usually sat. There was a good deal of morning calling in Duncombe after the sale, and, during this time, the fact of John's being

alive was established to the conviction of all except Miss Horsman, who, I believe, still doubted. I myself told Mr. Morgan, who immediately went to reclaim his money; saying to me, that he was thankful of the information; he was truly glad to hear it; and he shook me warmly by the hand for the first time for a month.

CHAPTER XVII.

"A FEW days after the sale, I was in the consulting-room. The servant must have left the folding-doors a little ajar, I think. Mrs. Munton came to call on Mrs. Rose; and the former being deaf, I heard all the speeches of the latter lady, as she was obliged to speak very loud in order to be heard. She began:—

"'This is a great pleasure, Mrs. Munton, so seldom as you are well enough to go out.'

"Mumble, mumble, mumble, through the door.

"'Oh, very well, thank you. Take this seat, and then you can admire my new work-table, ma'am; a present from Mr. Harrison.'

"Mumble, mumble.

"'Who could have told you, ma'am? Miss Horsman? Oh, yes, I showed it Miss Horsman.'

"Mumble, mumble.

"'I don't quite understand you, ma'am.'

"Mumble, mumble.

"'I'm not blushing, I believe. I really am quite in *the dark* as to what you mean.'

"Mumble, mumble.

"'Oh yes, Mr. Harrison and I are most comfortable together. He reminds me so of my dear Mr. Rose;—just as fidgety and anxious in his profession.'

"Mumble, mumble.

"'I'm sure you are joking now, ma'am.' Then I heard a pretty loud—

"'Oh no;' mumble, mumble, mumble, for a long time.

"'Did he really? Well, I'm sure I don't know. I should be sorry to think he was doomed to be unfortunate in so serious an affair; but you know my undying regard for the late Mr. Rose.

"Another long mumble.

"'You're very kind, I'm sure. Mr. Rose always thought more of my happiness than his own'—a little crying—'but the turtle-dove has always been my ideal, ma'am.'

"Mumble, mumble.

"'No one could have been happier than I. As you say, it is a compliment to matrimony.'

"Mumble.

"'Oh, but you must not repeat such a thing. Mr. Harrison would not like it. He can't bear to have his affairs spoken about.'

"Then there was a change of subject; an inquiry after some poor person, I imagine; I heard Mrs. Rose say—

"'She has got a mucous membrane, I'm afraid, ma'am.'

"A commiserating mumble.

"'Not always fatal. I believe Mr. Rose knew some

cases that lived for years after it was discovered that they had a mucous membrane.'—A pause. Then Mrs. Rose spoke in a different tone.

"'Are you sure, ma'am, there is no mistake about what he said?'

"Mumble.

"'Pray don't be so observant, Mrs. Munton; you find out too much. One can have no little secrets.'

"The call broke up; and I heard Mrs. Munton say in the passage, 'I wish you joy, ma'am, with all my heart. There's no use denying it; for I've seen all along what would happen.'

"When I went in to dinner, I said to Mrs. Rose—

"'You've had Mrs. Munton here, I think. Did she bring any news?' To my surprise, she bridled and simpered, and replied, 'Oh, you must not ask, Mr. Harrison: such foolish reports.'

"I did not ask, as she seemed to wish me not, and I knew there were silly reports always about. Then I think she was vexed that I did not ask. Altogether she went on so strangely that I could not help looking at her; and then she took up a hand-screen, and held it between me and her. I really felt rather anxiously.

"'Are you not feeling well?' said I, innocently.

"'Oh, thank you, I believe I'm quite well; only the room is rather warm, is it not?'

"'Let me put the blinds down for you; the sun begins to have a good deal of power.' I drew down the blinds.

"'You are so attentive, Mr. Harrison. Mr. Rose himself never did more for my little wishes than you do.'

"'I wish I could do more,—I wish I could show you

how much I feel—— ' her kindness to John Brouncker, I was going on to say; but I was just then called out to a patient. Before I went I turned back, and said—

" ' Take care of yourself, my dear Mrs. Rose; you had better rest a little.'

" ' For your sake, I will,' said she tenderly.

" I did not care for whose sake she did it. Only I really thought she was not quite well, and required rest. I thought she was more affected than usual at tea-time; and could have been angry with her nonsensical ways once or twice, but that I knew the real goodness of her heart. She said she wished she had the power to sweeten my life as she could my tea. I told her what a comfort she had been all during my late time of anxiety, and then I stole out to try if I could hear the evening singing at the Vicarage, by standing close to the garden wall.

CHAPTER XVIII.

" The next morning I met Mr. Bullock by appointment, to talk a little about the legacy which was paid into his hands. As I was leaving his office, feeling full of my riches, I met Miss Horsman. She smiled rather grimly, and said:

" ' Oh! Mr. Harrison, I must congratulate, I believe. I don't know whether I ought to have known, but as I do, I must wish you joy. A very nice little sum, too. I always said you would have money.'

"So she had found out my legacy, had she? Well, it was no secret, and one likes the reputation of being a person of property. Accordingly I smiled, and said I was much obliged to her, and if I could alter the figures to my liking, she might congratulate me still more.

"She said, 'Oh, Mr. Harrison, you can't have everything. It would be better the other way, certainly. Money is the great thing, as you've found out. The relation died most opportunely, I must say.'

"'He was no relative,' said I; 'only an intimate friend.'

"'Dear-ah-me! I thought it had been a brother! Well, at any rate, the legacy is safe.'

"I wished her good morning, and passed on. Before long I was sent for to Miss Tomkinson's.

"Miss Tomkinson sat in severe state to receive me. I went in with an air of ease, because I always felt so uncomfortable.

"'Is this true that I hear?' asked she, in an inquisitorial manner.

"I thought she alluded to my five hundred pounds. So I smiled, and said that I believed it was.

"'Can money be so great an object with you, Mr. Harrison?' she asked again.

"I said I had never cared much for money, except as an assistance to any plan of settling in life; and then, as I did not like her severe way of treating the subject, I said that I hoped every one was well; though of course I expected some one was ill, or I should not have been sent for.

"Miss Tomkinson looked very grave and sad. Then

she answered, 'Caroline is very poorly—the old palpitations at the heart; but of course that is nothing to you.'

"I said I was very sorry. She had a weakness there, I knew. Could I see her? I might be able to order something for her.

"I thought I heard Miss Tomkinson say something in a low voice about my being a heartless deceiver. Then she spoke up. 'I was always distrustful of you, Mr. Harrison. I never liked your looks. I begged Caroline again and again not to confide in you. I foresaw how it would end. And now I fear her precious life will be a sacrifice.'

"I begged her not to distress herself, for in all probability there was very little the matter with her sister. Might I see her?

"'No!' she said, shortly, standing up as if to dismiss me. 'There has been too much of this seeing and calling. By my consent, you shall never see her again.'

"I bowed. I was annoyed, of course. Such a dismissal might injure my practice just when I was most anxious to increase it.

"'Have you no apology, no excuse to offer?'

"I said I had done my best; I did not feel that there was any reason to offer an apology. I wished her good morning. Suddenly she came forwards.

"'Oh, Mr. Harrison,' said she, 'if you have really loved Caroline, do not let a little paltry money make you desert her for another.'

"I was struck dumb. Loved Miss Caroline! I loved Miss Tomkinson a great deal better, and yet I disliked her. She went on.

"'I *have saved* nearly three thousand pounds. If

you think you are too poor to marry without money, I will give it all to Caroline. I am strong, and can go on working; but she is weak, and this disappointment will kill her.' She sat down suddenly, and covered her face with her hands. Then she looked up.

"'You are unwilling, I see. Don't suppose I would have urged you if it had been for myself; but she has had so much sorrow.' And now she fairly cried aloud. I tried to explain; but she would not listen, but kept saying, 'Leave the house, sir; leave the house!' But I would be heard.

"'I have never had any feeling warmer than respect for Miss Caroline, and I have never shown any different feeling. I never for an instant thought of making her my wife, and she has had no cause in my behaviour to imagine I entertained any such intention.'

"'This is adding insult to injury,' said she. 'Leave the house, sir, this instant!'

CHAPTER XIX.

"I WENT, and sadly enough. In a small town such an occurrence is sure to be talked about, and to make a great deal of mischief. When I went home to dinner I was so full of it, and foresaw so clearly that I should need some advocate soon to set the case in its right light, that I determined on making a confidante of good Mrs. Rose. I could not eat. She watched me tenderly, *and sighed* when she saw my want of appetite.

"'I am sure you have something on your mind, Mr. Harrison. Would it be—would it not be—a relief to impart it to some sympathizing friend?'

"It was just what I wanted to do.

"'My dear kind Mrs. Rose,' said I, 'I must tell you, if you will listen.'

"She took up the fire-screen, and held it, as yesterday, between me and her.

"'The most unfortunate misunderstanding has taken place. Miss Tomkinson thinks that I have been paying attentions to Miss Caroline; when, in fact—may I tell you, Mrs. Rose?—my affections are placed elsewhere. Perhaps you have found it out already?' for indeed I thought I had been too much in love to conceal my attachment to Sophy from any one who knew my movements as well as Mrs. Rose.

"She hung down her head, and said she believed she had found out my secret.

"'Then only think how miserably I am situated. If I have any hope—oh, Mrs. Rose, do you think I have any hope?——'

"She put the hand-screen still more before her face, and after some hesitation she said she thought 'if I persevered—in time—I might have hope.' And then she suddenly got up, and left the room.

CHAPTER XX.

"THAT afternoon I met Mr. Bullock in the street. My mind was so full of the affair with Miss Tomkinson, that I should have passed him without notice, if he had not stopped me short, and said that he must speak to me; about my wonderful five hundred pounds, I supposed. But I did not care for that now.

"'What is this I hear,' said he, severely, 'about your engagement with Mrs. Rose?'

"'With Mrs. Rose!' said I, almost laughing, although my heart was heavy enough.

"'Yes! with Mrs. Rose!' said he, sternly.

"'I'm not enaged to Mrs. Rose,' I replied. 'There is some mistake.'

"'I'm glad to hear it, sir,' he answered, 'very glad. It requires some explanation, however. Mrs. Rose has been congratulated, and has acknowledged the truth of the report. It is confirmed by many facts. The work-table you bought, confessing your intention of giving it to your future wife, is given to her. How do you account for these things, sir?'

"I said I did not pretend to account for them. At present, a good deal was inexplicable; and when I could give an explanation, I did not think that I should feel myself called upon to give it to him.

"'Very well, sir, very well,' replied he, growing very red. 'I shall take care, and let Mr. Morgan know the opinion I entertain of you. What do you think that man deserves to be called who enters a family under the *plea of* friendship, and takes advantage of his intimacy

to win the affections of the daughter, and then engages himself to another woman?'

"I thought he referred to Miss Caroline. I simply said I could only say that I was not engaged; and that Miss Tomkinson had been quite mistaken in supposing I had been paying any attentions to her sister beyond those dictated by mere civility.

"'Miss Tomkinson! Miss Caroline! I don't understand to what you refer. Is there another victim to your perfidy! What I allude to are the attentions you have paid to my daughter, Miss Bullock.'

"Another! I could but disclaim, as I had done in the case of Miss Caroline; but I began to be in despair. Would Miss Horsman, too, come forward as a victim to my tender affections? It was all Mr. Morgan's doing, who had lectured me into this tenderly deferential manner. But on the score of Miss Bullock, I was brave in my innocence. I had positively disliked her; and so I told her father, though in more civil and measured terms, adding that I was sure the feeling was reciprocal.

"He looked as if he would like to horsewhip me. I longed to call him out.

"'I hope my daughter has had sense enough to despise you; I hope she has, that's all. I trust my wife may be mistaken as to her feelings.'

"So, he had heard all through the medium of his wife. That explained something, and rather calmed me. I begged he would ask Miss Bullock if she had ever thought I had any ulterior object in my intercourse with her, beyond mere friendliness (and not so much of that, I might *have added*). I would refer it to her.

"'Girls,' said Mr. Bullock, a little more quietly, 'do not like to acknowledge that they have been deceived and disappointed. I consider my wife's testimony as likely to be nearer the truth than my daughter's, for that reason. And she tells me she never doubted but that, if not absolutely engaged, you understood each other perfectly. She is sure Jemima is deeply wounded by your engagement to Mrs. Rose.'

"'Once for all, I am not engaged to anybody. Till you have seen your daughter, and learnt the truth from her, I will wish you farewell.'

"I bowed in a stiff, haughty manner, and walked off homewards. But when I got to my own door, I remembered Mrs. Rose, and all that Mr. Bullock had said about her acknowledging the truth of the report of my engagement to her. Where could I go to be safe? Mrs. Rose, Miss Bullock, Miss Caroline—they lived as it were at the three points of an equilateral triangle; here was I in the centre. I would go to Mr. Morgan's, and drink tea with him. There, at any rate, I was secure from any one wanting to marry me; and I might be as professionally bland as I liked, without being misunderstood. But there, too, a *contretemps* awaited me.

CHAPTER XXI.

"Mr. Morgan was looking grave. After a minute or two of humming and hawing, he said—

"'I have been sent for to Miss Caroline Tomkinson,

Mr. Harrison. I am sorry to hear of this—I am grieved to find that there seems to have been some trifling with the affections of a very worthy lady. Miss Tomkinson, who is in sad distress, tells me that they had every reason to believe that you were attached to her sister. May I ask if you do not intend to marry her?'

"'I said nothing was farther from my thoughts.

"'My dear sir,' said Mr. Morgan, rather agitated, 'do not express yourself so strongly and vehemently. It is derogatory to the sex to speak so. It is more respectful to say, in these cases, that you do not venture to entertain a hope; such a manner is generally understood, and does not sound like such positive objection.'

"'I cannot help it, sir; I must talk in my own natural manner. I would not speak disrespectfully of any woman; but nothing should induce me to marry Miss Caroline Tomkinson; not if she were Venus herself, and Queen of England into the bargain. I cannot understand what has given rise to the idea.'

"'Indeed, sir; I think that is very plain. You have a trifling case to attend to in the house, and you invariably make it a pretext for seeing and conversing with the lady.'

"'That was her doing, not mine!' said I, vehemently.

"'Allow me to go on. You are discovered on your knees before her,—a positive injury to the establishment, as Miss Tomkinson observes; a most passionate valentine is sent; and when questioned, you acknowledge the sincerity of meaning which you affix to such things,'—he stopped, for in his earnestness he had been talking more quickly than usual, and was out of breath. I burst in with my explanations—

"'The valentine I knew nothing about.'

"'It is in your handwriting,' said he, coldly. 'I should be most deeply grieved to—in fact, I will not think it possible of your father's son. But I must say, it is in your handwriting.'

"I tried again, and at last succeeded in convincing him that I had been only unfortunate, not intentionally guilty of winning Miss Caroline's affections. I said that I had been endeavouring, it was true, to practise the manner he had recommended, of universal sympathy, and recalled to his mind some of the advice he had given me. He was a good deal hurried.

"'But, my dear sir, I had no idea that you would carry it out to such consequences. "Philandering," Miss Tomkinson called it. That is a hard word, sir. My manner has been always tender and sympathetic; but I am not aware that I ever excited any hopes; there never was any report about me. I believe no lady was ever attached to me. You must strive after this happy medium, sir.'

"I was still distressed. Mr. Morgan had only heard of one, but there were three ladies (including Miss Bullock) hoping to marry me. He saw my annoyance.

"'Don't be too much distressed about it, my dear sir; I was sure you were too honourable a man, from the first. With a conscience like yours, I would defy the world.'

"He became anxious to console me, and I was hesitating whether I would not tell him all my three dilemmas, when a note was brought in to him. It was from Mrs. Munton. He threw it to me with a face of dismay.

"MY DEAR MR. MORGAN,—I most sincerely congratulate you on the happy matrimonial engagement I hear you have formed with Miss Tomkinson. All previous circumstances, as I have just been remarking to Miss Horsman, combine to promise you felicity. And I wish that every blessing may attend your married life.

"Most sincerely yours,
"JANE MUNTON.

"I could not help laughing, he had been so lately congratulating himself that no report of the kind had ever been circulated about himself. He said—

"'Sir! this is no laughing matter; I assure you it is not.' I could not resist asking, if I was to conclude that there was no truth in the report.

"Truth, sir! it's a lie from beginning to end. I don't like to speak too decidedly about any lady; and I've a great respect for Miss Tomkinson; but I do assure you, sir, I'd as soon marry one of her Majesty's Life Guards. I would rather;—it would be more suitable. Miss Tomkinson is a very worthy lady; but she's a perfect grenadier.'

"He grew very nervous. He was evidently insecure. He thought it not impossible that Miss Tomkinson might come and marry him, *vi et armis*. I am sure he had some dim idea of abduction in his mind. Still, he was better off than I was; for he was in his own house, and report had only engaged him to one lady: while I stood like Paris among three contending beauties. Truly, an apple of discord had been thrown into our little town. I suspected, at the time, what I know now, that it was Miss Horsman's doing; not intentionally, I will do her the justice to say. But she had shouted out the story of my behaviour to Miss Caroline up Mrs. Munton's

trumpet; and that lady, possessed with the idea that I was engaged to Mrs. Rose, had imagined the masculine pronoun to relate to Mr. Morgan, whom she had seen only that afternoon *tête-à-tête* with Miss Tomkinson, condoling with her in some tender deferential manner, I'll be bound.

CHAPTER XXII.

"I WAS very cowardly. I positively dared not go home; but at length I was obliged to. I had done all I could to console Mr. Morgan, but he refused to be comforted. I went at last. I rang at the bell. I don't know who opened the door, but I think it was Mrs. Rose. I kept a handkerchief to my face, and, muttering something about having a dreadful toothache, I flew up to my room, and bolted the door. I had no candle; but what did that signify. I was safe. I could not sleep; and when I did fall into a sort of doze, it was ten times worse wakening up. I could not remember whether I was engaged or not. If I was engaged, who was the lady? I had always considered myself as rather plain than otherwise; but surely I had made a mistake. Fascinating I certainly must be; but perhaps I was handsome. As soon as day dawned, I got up to ascertain the fact at the looking-glass. Even with the best disposition to be convinced, I could not see any striking beauty in my round face, with an unshaven beard and a nightcap like a fool's cap at the top. No! I must be content to be plain, but *agreeable*. All this I tell you in confidence. I would

not have my little bit of vanity known for the world. I fell asleep towards morning. I was awakened by a tap at my door. It was Peggy: she put in a hand with a note. I took it.

"'It is not from Miss Horsman?' said I, half in joke—half in very earnest fright.

"'No, sir; Mr. Morgan's man brought it.'

"I opened it. It ran thus:

"MY DEAR SIR,—It is now nearly twenty years since I have had a little relaxation, and I find that my health requires it. I have also the utmost confidence in you, and I am sure this feeling is shared by our patients. I have, therefore, no scruple in putting in execution a hastily formed plan, and going to Chesterton to catch the early train on my way to Paris. If your accounts are good, I shall remain away probably a fortnight. Direct to Meurice's. "Yours, most truly,

"J. MORGAN.

"P.S.—Perhaps it may be as well not to name where I am gone, especially to Miss Tomkinson.

"He had deserted me. He—with only one report—had left me to stand my ground with three.

"'Mrs. Rose's kind regards, sir, and it's nearly nine o'clock. Breakfast has been ready this hour, sir.'

"'Tell Mrs. Rose I don't want any breakfast. Or stay' (for I was very hungry), 'I will take a cup of tea and some toast up here.'

"Peggy brought the tray to the door.

"'I hope you're not ill, sir?' said she kindly.

"'Not very. I shall be better when I get into the air.'

"'Mrs. Rose seems sadly put about,' said she, 'she seems so grieved like.'

"I watched my opportunity, and went out by the side door in the garden.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"I HAD intended to ask Mr. Morgan to call at the vicarage, and give his parting explanation before they could hear the report. Now, I thought that if I could see Sophy, I would speak to her myself; but I did not wish to encounter the vicar. I went along the lane at the back of the vicarage, and came suddenly upon Miss Bullock. She coloured, and asked me if I would allow her to speak to me. I could only be resigned; but I thought I could probably set one report at rest by this conversation.

"She was almost crying.

"'I must tell you, Mr. Harrison, I have watched you here in order to speak to you. I heard with the greatest regret of papa's conversation with you yesterday.' She was fairly crying. 'I believe Mrs. Bullock finds me in her way, and wants to have me married. It is the only way in which I can account for such a complete misrepresentation as she had told papa. I don't care for you, in the least, sir. You never paid me any attentions. You've been almost rude to me; and I have liked you the better. That's to say, I never have liked you.'

"'I am truly glad to hear what you say,' answered I. 'Don't distress yourself. I was sure there was some mistake.'

"But she cried bitterly.

"'It is so hard to feel that my marriage—my absence—is desired so earnestly at home. I dread every new acquaintance we form with any gentleman. It is *sure to* be the beginning of a series of attacks on him,

of which everybody must be aware, and to which they may think I am a willing party. But I should not much mind if it were not for the conviction that she wishes me so earnestly away. Oh, my own dear mamma, you would never——'

"She cried more than ever. I was truly sorry for her, and had just taken her hand, and began—'My dear Miss Bullock——' when the door in the wall of the vicarage garden opened. It was the vicar letting out Miss Tomkinson, whose face was all swelled with crying. He saw me; but he did not bow, or make any sign. On the contrary, he looked down as from a severe eminence, and shut the door hastily. I turned to Miss Bullock.

"'I am afraid the vicar has been hearing something to my disadvantage from Miss Tomkinson, and it is very awkward——' She finished my sentence—'To have found us here together. Yes, but as long as we understand that we do not care for each other, it does not signify what people say.'

"'Oh, but to me it does,' said I! 'I may, perhaps, tell you—but do not mention it to a creature—I am attached to Miss Hutton.'

"'To Sophy! Oh, Mr. Harrison, I am so glad; she is such a sweet creature. Oh, I wish you joy.'

"'Not yet; I have never spoken about it.'

"'Oh, but it is certain to happen.' She jumped with a woman's rapidity to a conclusion. And then she began to praise Sophy. Never was a man yet who did not like to hear the praises of his mistress. I walked by her side; we came past the front of the vicarage together. I looked up, and saw Sophy there, and she saw me.

"That afternoon she was sent away; sent to visit her aunt ostensibly; in reality, because of the reports of my conduct, which were showered down upon the Vicar, and one of which he saw confirmed by his own eyes.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"I HEARD of Sophy's departure as one heard of everything, soon after it had taken place. I did not care for the awkwardness of my situation, which had so perplexed and amused me in the morning. I felt that something was wrong; that Sophy was taken away from me. I sank into despair. If anybody liked to marry me they might. I was willing to be sacrificed. I did not speak to Mrs. Rose. She wondered at me, and grieved over my coldness, I saw; but I had left off feeling anything. Miss Tomkinson cut me in the street; and it did not break my heart. Sophy was gone away; that was all I cared for. Where had they sent her to? Who was her aunt, that she should go and visit her? One day I met Lizzie, who looked as though she had been told not to speak to me, but could not help doing so.

"'Have you heard from your sister?' said I.

"'Yes.'

"'Where is she? I hope she is well.'

"'She is at the Leoms (I was not much wiser). Oh yes, she is very well. Fanny says she was at the Assembly last Wednesday, and danced all night with the officers.'

"I thought I would enter myself a member of the Peace Society at once. She was a little flirt, and a hard-hearted *creature*. I don't think I wished Lizzie good-by.

CHAPTER XXV.

"WHAT most people would have considered a more serious evil than Sophy's absence, befell me. I found that my practice was falling off. The prejudice of the town ran strongly against me. Mrs. Munton told me all that was said. She heard it through Miss Horsman. It was said,—cruel little town,—that my negligence or ignorance had been the cause of Walter's death; that Miss Tyrrell had become worse under my treatment; and that John Brouncker was all but dead, if he was not quite, from my mismanagement. All Jack Marshland's jokes and revelations, which had, I thought, gone to oblivion, were raked up to my discredit. He himself, formerly, to my astonishment, rather a favourite with the good people of Duncombe, was spoken of as one of my disreputable friends.

"In short, so prejudiced were the good people of Duncombe that I believe a very little would have made them suspect me of a brutal highway robbery, which took place in the neighbourhood about this time. Mrs. Munton told me *àpropos* of the robbery—that she had never yet understood the cause of my year's imprisonment in Newgate; she had no doubt, from what Mr. Morgan had told her, there was some good reason for it; but if I would tell her the particulars, she should like to know them.

"Miss Tomkinson sent for Mr. White, from Chesterton, to see Miss Caroline; and, as he was coming over, all our old patients seemed to take advantage of it, and send for *him too*.

"But the worst of all was the vicar's manner to me. If he had cut me, I could have asked him why he did so. But the freezing change in his behaviour was indescribable, though bitterly felt. I heard of Sophy's gaiety from Lizzie. I thought of writing to her. Just then Mr. Morgan's fortnight of absence expired. I was wearied out by Mrs. Rose's tender vagaries, and took no comfort from her sympathy, which indeed I rather avoided. Her tears irritated, instead of grieving me. I wished I could tell her at once that I had no intention of marrying her.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Mr. Morgan had not been at home above two hours before he was sent for to the Vicarage. Sophy had come back, and I had never heard of it. She had come home ill and weary, and longing for rest: and the *rest* seemed approaching with awful strides. Mr. Morgan forgot all his Parisian adventures, and all his terror of Miss Tomkinson, when he was sent for to see her. She was ill of a fever, which made fearful progress. When he told me, I wished to force the Vicarage door, if I might but see her. But I controlled myself; and only cursed my weak indecision, which had prevented my writing to her. It was well I had no patients; they would have had but a poor chance of attention. I hung about Mr. Morgan, who might see her, and did see her. But from what he told me, I perceived that the measures he was adopting were powerless to check so sudden and violent an illness.

Oh! if they would but let me see her. But that was out of the question. It was not merely that the Vicar had heard of my character as a gay Lothario, but that doubts had been thrown out of my medical skill. The accounts grew worse. Suddenly, my resolution was taken. Mr. Morgan's very regard for Sophy made him more than usually timid in his practice. I had my horse saddled, and galloped to Chesterton. I took the express train to town. I went to Dr. ——. I told him every particular of the case. He listened; but shook his head. He wrote down a prescription; and recommended a new preparation, not yet in full use; a preparation of a poison, in fact.

"'It may save her,' said he. 'It is a chance, in such a state of things as you describe. It must be given on the fifth day if the pulse will bear it. Crabbe makes up the preparation most skilfully. Let me hear from you, I beg.'

"I went to Crabbe's, I begged to make it up myself; but my hands trembled, so that I could not weigh the quantities. I asked the young man to do it for me. I went, without touching food, to the station, with my medicine and my prescription in my pocket. Back we flew through the country. I sprang on Bay Maldon, which my groom had in waiting, and galloped across the country to Duncombe.

"But I drew bridle when I came to the top of the hill—the hill above the old hall, from which we catch the first glimpse of the town, for I thought within myself that she might be dead; and I dreaded to come near certainty. The hawthorns were out in the woods, the *young lambs* were in the meadows, the song of the

thrushes filled the air; but it only made the thought the more terrible.

"'What, if in this world of hope and life she lies dead!' I heard the church bells soft and clear. I sickened to listen. Was it the passing bell? No!—it was ringing eight o'clock. I put spurs to my horse, down hill as it was. We dashed into the town. I turned him, saddle and bridle, into the stable-yard, and went off to Mr. Morgan's.

"'Is she—?' said I. 'How is she?'

"'Very ill. My poor fellow, I see how it is with you. She may live—but I fear. My dear sir, I am very much afraid.'

"I told him of my journey and consultation with Dr. ——, and showed him the prescription. His hands trembled as he put on his spectacles to read it.

"'This is a very dangerous medicine, sir,' said he, with his finger under the name of the poison.

"'It is a new preparation,' said I. 'Dr. —— relies much upon it.'

"'I dare not administer it,' he replied. 'I have never tried it. It must be very powerful. I dare not play tricks in this case.'

"I believe I stamped with impatience; but it was all of no use. My journey had been in vain. The more I urged the imminent danger of the case requiring some powerful remedy, the more nervous he became.

"I told him I would throw up the partnership. I threatened him with that, though, in fact, it was only what I felt I ought to do, and had resolved upon before Sophy's illness, as I had lost the confidence of his *patients*. He only said—

"'I cannot help it, sir. I shall regret it for your father's sake; but I must do my duty. I dare not run the risk of giving Miss Sophy this violent medicine,—a preparation of a deadly poison.'

"I left him without a word. He was quite right in adhering to his own views, as I can see now; but, at the time, I thought him brutal and obstinate.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"I WENT home. I spoke rudely to Mrs. Rose, who awaited my return at the door. I rushed past, and locked myself in my room. I could not go to bed.

"The morning sun came pouring in, and enraged me, as everything did since Mr. Morgan refused. I pulled the blind down so violently that the string broke. What did it signify? The light might come in. What was the sun to me? And then I remembered that that sun might be shining on her,—dead.

"I sat down and covered my face. Mrs. Rose knocked at the door. I opened it. She had never been in bed, and had been crying too.

"'Mr. Morgan wants to speak to you, sir!'

"I rushed back for my medicine, and went to him. He stood at the door, pale and anxious.

"'She's alive, sir,' said he, 'but that's all. We have sent for Dr. Hamilton. I'm afraid he will not come in time. Do you know, sir, I think we should venture—*with Dr.* ——'s sanction—to give her that

medicine. It is but a chance; but it is the only one, I'm afraid.' He fairly cried before he had ended.

"'I've got it here,' said I, setting off to walk; but he could not go so fast.

"'I beg your pardon, sir,' said he, 'for my abrupt refusal last night.'

"'Indeed, sir,' said I; 'I ought much rather to beg your pardon. I was very violent.'

"'Oh! never mind! never mind! Will you repeat what Dr. —— said?'

"I did so; and then I asked, with a meekness that astonished myself, if I might not go in and administer it.

"'No, sir,' said he, 'I'm afraid not. I am sure your good heart would not wish to give pain. Besides, it might agitate her, if she has any consciousness before death. In her delirium she has often mentioned your name; and, sir, I'm sure you won't name it again, as it may, in fact, be considered a professional secret; but I did hear our good Vicar speak a little strongly about you; in fact, sir, I did hear him curse you. You see the mischief it might make in the parish, I'm sure, if this were known.'

"I gave him the medicine, and watched him in, and saw the door shut. I hung about the place all day. Poor and rich all came to inquire. The county people drove up in their carriages,—the halt and the lame came on their crutches. Their anxiety did my heart good. Mr. Morgan told me that she slept, and I watched Dr. Hamilton into the house. The night came on. She slept. I watched round the house. I saw the light high up, burning still and steady. Then I *saw it* moved. It was the crisis, in one way or other.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"MR. MORGAN came out. Good old man! The tears were running down his cheeks: he could not speak; but kept shaking my hands. I did not want words. I understood that she was better.

"'Dr. Hamilton says, it was the only medicine that could have saved her. I was an old fool, sir. I beg your pardon. The Vicar shall know all. I beg your pardon, sir, if I was abrupt.'

"Everything went on brilliantly from this time.

"Mr. Bullock called to apologize for his mistake, and consequent upbraiding. John Brouncker came home, brave and well.

"There was still Miss Tomkinson in the ranks of the enemy; and Mrs. Rose too much, I feared, in the ranks of the friends.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"ONE night she had gone to bed, and I was thinking of going. I had been studying in the back room, where I went for refuge from her in the present position of affairs; (I read a good number of surgical books about this time, and also *Vanity Fair*,) when I heard a loud, long-continued knocking at the door, enough to waken the whole street. Before I could get to open it, I heard that well-known bass of Jack Marshland's, once heard never to be forgotten, pipe up the negro song,

"'Who's dat knocking at de door?'

"Though it was raining hard at the time, and I stood waiting to let him in, he would finish his melody in the open air; loud and clear along the street it sounded. I saw Miss Tomkinson's night-capped head emerge from a window. She called out 'Police! police!'

"Now there were no police, only a rheumatic constable in the town; but it was the custom of the ladies, when alarmed at night, to call an imaginary police, which had, they thought, an intimidating effect; but as every one knew the real state of the unwatched town, we did not much mind it in general. Just now, however, I wanted to regain my character. So I pulled Jack in, quavering as he entered.

"'You've spoilt a good shake,' said he, 'that's what you have. I'm nearly up to Jenny Lind; and you see I'm a nightingale, like her.'

"We sat up late; and I don't know how it was, but I told him all my matrimonial misadventures.

"'I thought I could imitate your hand pretty well,' said he. 'My word! it was a flaming valentine! No wonder she thought you loved her!'

"'So that was your doing, was it? Now I'll tell you what you shall do to make up for it. You shall write me a letter confessing your hoax—a letter that I can show.'

"'Give me pen and paper, my boy! you shall dictate. "With a deeply penitent heart—" will that do for a beginning?'

"I told him what to write; a simple, straightforward confession of his practical joke. I enclosed it in a few lines of regret that, unknown to me, any of my friends *should* have so acted.

CHAPTER XXX.

"All this time I knew that Sophy was slowly recovering. One day I met Miss Bullock, who had seen her.

"'We have been talking about you,' said she, with a bright smile; for since she knew I disliked her, she felt quite at her ease, and could smile very pleasantly. I understood that she had been explaining the misunderstanding about herself to Sophy; so that when Jack Marshland's note had been sent to Miss Tomkinson's, I thought myself in a fair way to have my character established in two quarters. But the third was my dilemma. Mrs. Rose had really so much of my true regard for her good qualities, that I disliked the idea of a formal explanation, in which a good deal must be said on my side to wound her. We had become very much estranged ever since I had heard of this report of my engagement to her. I saw that she grieved over it. While Jack Marshland stayed with us, I felt at my ease in the presence of a third person. But he told me confidentially he durst not stay long, for fear some of the ladies should snap him up, and marry him. Indeed I myself did not think it unlikely that he would snap one of them up if he could. For when we met Miss Bullock one day, and heard her hopeful, joyous account of Sophy's progress (to whom she was a daily visitor), he asked me who that bright-looking girl was? And when I told him she was the Miss Bullock of whom I had spoken to him, he was pleased to observe that he thought I had been a great fool, and asked me if Sophy had anything like such splendid eyes. He made me

repeat about Miss Bullock's unhappy circumstances at home, and then became very thoughtful—a most unusual and morbid symptom in his case.

"Soon after he went, by Mr. Morgan's kind offices and explanations, I was permitted to see Sophy. I might not speak much; it was prohibited for fear of agitating her. We talked of the weather and the flowers; and we were silent. But her little white thin hand lay in mine; and we understood each other without words. I had a long interview with the Vicar afterwards; and came away glad and satisfied.

"Mr. Morgan called in the afternoon, evidently anxious, though he made no direct inquiries (he was too polite for that), to hear the result of my visit at the Vicarage. I told him to give me joy. He shook me warmly by the hand; and then rubbed his own together. I thought I would consult him about my dilemma with Mrs. Rose, who, I was afraid, would be deeply affected by my engagement.

"'There is only one awkward circumstance,' said I,—'about Mrs. Rose.' I hesitated how to word the fact of her having received congratulations on her supposed engagement with me, and her manifest attachment; but, before I could speak, he broke in.

"'My dear sir, you need not trouble yourself about that; she will have a home. In fact, sir,' said he, reddening a little, 'I thought it would, perhaps, put a stop to those reports connecting my name with Miss Tomkinson's, if I married some one else. I hoped it might prove an efficacious contradiction. And I was struck with admiration for Mrs. Rose's undying memory of her *late husband*. Not to be prolix, I have this morning

obtained Mrs. Rose's consent to—to marry her, in fact, sir!' said he, jerking out the climax.

"Here was an event! Then Mr. Morgan had never heard the report about Mrs. Rose and me. (To this day, I think she would have taken me, if I had proposed.) So much the better.

"Marriages were in the fashion that year. Mr. Bullock met me one morning, as I was going to ride with Sophy. He and I had quite got over our misunderstanding, thanks to Jemima, and were as friendly as ever. This morning he was chuckling aloud as he walked.

"'Stop, Mr. Harrison!' he said, as I went quickly past. 'Have you heard the news? Miss Horsman has just told me Miss Caroline has eloped with young Hoggins! She is ten years older than he is! How can her gentility like being married to a tallow-chandler? It is a very good thing for her, though,' he added, in a more serious manner; 'Old Hoggins is very rich; and though he's angry just now, he will soon be reconciled.'

"Any vanity I might have entertained on the score of the three ladies who were, at one time, said to be captivated by my charms, was being rapidly dispersed. Soon after Mr. Hoggins' marriage, I met Miss Tomkinson face to face, for the first time since our memorable conversation. She stopped me, and said,—

"'Don't refuse to receive my congratulations, Mr. Harrison, on your most happy engagement to Miss Hutton. I owe you an apology, too, for my behaviour when I last saw you at our house. I really did think Caroline was attached to you then; and it irritated me, I confess, in a very wrong and unjustifiable way. But I

heard her telling Mr. Hoggins only yesterday that she had been attached to him for years; ever since he was in pinafores, she dated it from; and when I asked her afterwards how she could say so, after her distress on hearing that false report about you and Mrs. Rose, she cried, and said I never had understood her; and that the hysterics which alarmed me so much, were simply caused by eating pickled cucumber. I am very sorry for my stupidity, and improper way of speaking; but I hope we are friends now, Mr. Harrison, for I should wish to be liked by Sophy's husband.'

"Good Miss Tomkinson! to believe the substitution of indigestion for disappointed affection. I shook her warmly by the hand; and we have been all right ever since. I think I told you she is baby's godmother."

CHAPTER XXXI.

"I HAD some difficulty in persuading Jack Marshland to be groomsman; but when he heard all the arrangements, he came. Miss Bullock was bridesmaid. He liked us all so well, that he came again at Christmas, and was far better behaved than he had been the year before. He won golden opinions indeed. Miss Tomkinson said he was a reformed young man. We dined all together at Mr. Morgan's (the Vicar wanted us to go there; but, from what Sophy told me, Helen was not confident of the mincemeat, and rather dreaded so large a party). *We had* a jolly day of it. Mrs. Morgan was as kind

and motherly as ever. Miss Horsman certainly did set out a story that the Vicar was thinking of Miss Tomkinson for his second; or else, I think, we had no other report circulated in consequence of our happy, merry Christmas-day; and it is a wonder, considering how Jack Marshland went on with Jemima.

"Here Sophy came back from putting baby to bed; and Charles wakened up."

THE SEXTON'S HERO.

The afternoon sun shed down his glorious rays on the grassy churchyard, making the shadow, cast by the old yew-tree under which we sat, seem deeper and deeper by contrast. The everlasting hum of myriads of summer insects made luxurious lullaby.

Of the view that lay beneath our gaze, I cannot speak adequately. The foreground was the grey-stone wall of the vicarage-garden; rich in the colouring made by innumerable lichens, ferns, ivy of most tender green and most delicate tracery, and the vivid scarlet of the crane's-bill, which found a home in every nook and crevice—and at the summit of that old wall flaunted some unpruned tendrils of the vine, and long flower-laden branches of the climbing rose-tree, trained against the inner side. Beyond, lay meadow green, and mountain grey, and the blue dazzle of Morecambe Bay, as it sparkled between us and the more distant view.

For a while we were silent, living in sight and murmuring sound. Then Jeremy took up our conversation

where, suddenly feeling weariness, as we saw that deep green shadowy resting-place, we had ceased speaking a quarter of an hour before.

It is one of the luxuries of holiday-time that thoughts are not rudely shaken from us by outward violence of hurry and busy impatience, but fall maturely from our lips in the sunny leisure of our days. The stock may be bad, but the fruit is ripe.

"How would you then define a hero?" I asked.

There was a long pause, and I had almost forgotten my question in watching a cloud-shadow floating over the far-away hills, when Jeremy made answer:

"My idea of a hero is one who acts up to the highest idea of duty he has been able to form, no matter at what sacrifice. I think that by this definition, we may include all phases of character, even to the heroes of old, whose sole (and to us, low) idea of duty consisted in personal prowess."

"Then you would even admit the military heroes?" asked I.

"I would; with a certain kind of pity for the circumstances which had given them no higher ideas of duty. Still, if they sacrificed self to do what they sincerely believed to be right, I do not think I could deny them the title of hero."

"A poor, unchristian heroism, whose manifestation consists in injury to others!" I said.

We were both startled by a third voice.

"If I might make so bold, sir"—and then the speaker stopped.

It was the Sexton, whom, when we first arrived, we had noticed, as an accessory to the scene, but whom we

had forgotten, as much as though he were as inanimate as one of the moss-covered head-stones.

"If I might be so bold," said he again, waiting leave to speak. Jeremy bowed in deference to his white, uncovered head. And so encouraged, he went on.

"What that gentleman" (alluding to my last speech) "has just now said, brings to my mind one who is dead and gone this many a year ago. I, may be, have not rightly understood your meaning, gentlemen, but as far as I could gather it, I think you'd both have given in to thinking poor Gilbert Dawson a hero. At any rate," said he, heaving a long quivering sigh, "I have reason to think him so."

"Will you take a seat, sir, and tell us about him?" said Jeremy, standing up until the old man was seated. I confess I felt impatient at the interruption.

"It will be forty-five year come Martinmas," said the Sexton, sitting down on a grassy mound at our feet, "since I finished my 'prenticeship, and settled down at Lindal. You can see Lindal, sir, at evenings and mornings across the bay; a little to the right of Grange; at least, I used to see it, many a time and oft, afore my sight grew so dark: and I have spent many a quarter of an hour a-gazing at it far away, and thinking of the days I lived there, till the tears came so thick to my eyes, I could gaze no longer. I shall never look upon it again, either far-off or near, but you may see it, both ways, and a terrible bonny spot it is. In my young days, when I went to settle there, it was full of as wild a set of young fellows as ever were clapped eyes on; all for fighting, poaching, quarrelling, and such like work. I were startled myself when I first found what

a set I were among, but soon I began to fall into their ways, and I ended by being as rough a chap as any on 'em. I'd been there a matter of two year, and were reckoned by most the cock of the village, when Gilbert Dawson, as I was speaking of, came to Lindal. He were about as strapping a chap as I was, (I used to be six feet high, though now I'm so shrunk and doubled up,) and, as we were like in the same trade (both used to prepare osiers and wood for the Liverpool coopers, who get a deal of stuff from the copses round the bay, sir,) we were thrown together, and took mightily to each other. I put my best leg foremost to be equal with Gilbert, for I'd had some schooling, though since I'd been at Lindal I'd lost a good part of what I'd learnt; and I kept my rough ways out of sight for a time, I felt so ashamed of his getting to know them. But that did not last long. I began to think he fancied a girl I dearly loved, but who had always held off from me. Eh! but she was a pretty one in those days! There's none like her, now. I think I see her going along the road with her dancing tread, and shaking back her long yellow curls, to give me or any other young fellow a saucy word; no wonder Gilbert was taken with her, for all he was grave, and she so merry and light. But I began to think she liked him again; and then my blood was all afire. I got to hate him for everything he did. Afore-time I had stood by, admiring to see him, how he leapt, and what a quoiter and cricketer he was. And now I ground my teeth with hatred whene'er he did a thing which caught Letty's eye. I could read it in her look that she liked him, for all she held herself just as high with him as

with all the rest. Lord God forgive me! how I hated that man."

He spoke as if the hatred were a thing of yesterday, so clear within his memory were shown the actions and feelings of his youth. And then he dropped his voice, and said:

"Well! I began to look out to pick a quarrel with him, for my blood was up to fight him. If I beat him, (and I were a rare boxer in those days,) I thought Letty would cool towards him. So one evening at quoits (I'm sure I don't know how or why, but large doings grow out of small words) I fell out with him, and challenged him to fight. I could see he were very wroth by his colour coming and going—and, as I said before, he were a fine active young fellow. But all at once he drew in, and said he would not fight. Such a yell as the Lindal lads, who were watching us, set up! I hear it yet. I could na' help but feel sorry for him, to be so scorned, and I thought he'd not rightly taken my meaning, and I'd give him another chance; so I said it again, and dared him, as plain as words could speak, to fight out the quarrel. He told me then, he had no quarrel against me; that he might have said something to put me up; he did not know that he had, but that if he had, he asked pardon; but that he would not fight no-how.

"I was so full of scorn at his cowardliness, that I was vexed I'd given him the second chance, and I joined in the yell that was set up, twice as bad as before. He stood it out, his teeth set, and looking very white, and when we were silent for want of breath, he said out loud, but in a hoarse voice, quite different from his own—

"'I cannot fight, because I think it is wrong to quarrel, and use violence.'

"Then he turned to go away; I were so beside myself with scorn and hate, that I called out,—

"'Tell truth, lad, at least; if thou dare not fight, dunnot go and tell a lie about it. Mother's moppet is afraid of a black eye, pretty dear. It shannot be hurt, but it munnot tell lies.'

"Well, they laughed, but I could not laugh. It seemed such a thing for a stout young chap to be a coward, and afraid!

"Before the sun had set, it was talked of all over Lindal, how I had challenged Gilbert to fight, and how he'd denied me; and the folks stood at their doors, and looked at him going up the hill to his home, as if he'd been a monkey or a foreigner,—but no one wished him good e'en. Such a thing as refusing to fight had never been heard of afore at Lindal. Next day, however, they had found voice. The men muttered the word 'coward' in his hearing, and kept aloof; the women tittered as he passed, and the little impudent lads and lasses shouted out, 'How long is it sin' thou turned quaker?' 'Good-by, Jonathan Broad-brim,' and such like jests.

"That evening I met him, with Letty by his side, coming up from the shore. She was almost crying as I came upon them at the turn of the lane; and looking up in his face, as if begging him something. And so she was, she told me it after. For she did really like him; and could not abide to hear him scorned by every one for being a coward; and she, coy as she was, all but told him that very night that she loved him, and

begged him not to disgrace himself, but fight me as I'd dared him to. When he still stuck to it he could not, for that it was wrong, she was so vexed and mad-like at the way she'd spoken, and the feelings she'd let out to coax him, that she said more stinging things about his being a coward than all the rest put together, (according to what she told me, sir, afterwards,) and ended by saying she'd never speak to him again, as long as she lived;—she did once again though,—her blessing was the last human speech that reached his ear in his wild death struggle.

"But much happened afore that time. From the day I met them walking, Letty turned towards me; I could see a part of it was to spite Gilbert, for she'd be twice as kind when he was near, or likely to hear of it; but by-and-by she get to like me for my own sake, and it was all settled for our marriage. Gilbert kept aloof from every one, and fell into a sad, careless way. His very gait was changed; his step used to be brisk and sounding, and now his foot lingered heavily on the ground. I used to try and daunt him with my eye, but he would always meet my look in a steady, quiet way, for all so much about him was altered; the lads would not play with him; and as soon as he found he was to be slighted by them whenever he came to quoiting or cricket, he just left off coming.

"The old clerk was the only one he kept company with; or perhaps, rightly to speak, the only one who would keep company with him. They got so thick at last, that old Jonas would say, Gilbert had gospel on his side, and did no more than gospel told him to do; *but* we none of us gave much credit to what he said,

more by token our vicar had a brother, a colonel in the army; and as we threeped it many a time to Jonas, would he set himself up to know the gospel better than the vicar? that would be putting the cart afore the horse, like the French radicals. And if the vicar had thought quarrelling and fighting wicked, and again the Bible, would he have made so much work about all the victories, that were as plenty as blackberries at that time of day, and kept the little bell of Lindal church for ever ringing; or would he have thought so much of 'my brother the colonel,' as he was always talking on?

"After I was married to Letty I left off hating Gilbert. I even kind of pitied him—he was so scorned and slighted; and for all he'd a bold look about him, as if he were not ashamed, he seemed pining and shrunk. It's a wearying thing to be kept at arm's length by one's kind; and so Gilbert found it, poor fellow. The little children took to him, though; they'd be round about him like a swarm of bees—them as was too young to know what a coward was, and only felt that he was ever ready to love and to help them, and was never loud or cross, however naughty they might be. After a while we had our little one too; such a blessed darling she was, and dearly did we love her; Letty in especial, who seemed to get all the thought I used to think sometimes she wanted, after she had her baby to care for.

"All my kin lived on this side the bay, up above Kellet. Jane (that's her that lies buried near yon white rose-tree) was to be married, and nought would serve her but that Letty and I must come to the wedding; for all my sisters loved Letty, she had such winning

ways with her. Letty did not like to leave her baby, nor yet did I want her to take it: so, after a talk, we fixed to leave it with Letty's mother for the afternoon. I could see her heart ached a bit, for she'd never left it till then, and she seemed to fear all manner of evil, even to the French coming and taking it away. Well! we borrowed a shandry, and harnessed my old grey mare, as I used in th' cart, and set off as grand as King George across the Sands about three o'clock, for you see it were high water about twelve, and we'd to go and come back same tide, as Letty could not leave her baby for long. It were a merry afternoon, were that; last time I ever saw Letty laugh heartily; and for that matter, last time I ever laughed downright hearty myself. The latest crossing time fell about nine o'clock, and we were late at starting. Clocks were wrong; and we'd a piece of work chasing a pig father had given Letty to take home; we bagged him at last, and he screeched and screeched in the back part o' th' shandry, and we laughed and they laughed; and in the midst of all the merriment the sun set, and that sober'd us a bit, for then we knew what time it was. I whipped the old mare, but she was a deal beener than she was in the morning, and would neither go quick up nor down the brows, and they're not a few 'twixt Kellet and the shore. On the sands it were worse. They were very heavy, for the fresh had come down after the rains we'd had. Lord! how I did whip the poor mare, to make the most of the red light as yet lasted. You, maybe, don't know the Sands, gentlemen. From Bolton side, where we started from, it is better than six mile to Cart-lane, and two channels to cross, let alone holes and quick-*sands*. At the second channel from us the guide waits,

all during crossing time from sunrise to sunset;—but for the three hours on each side high water he's not there, in course. He stays after sunset if he's forespoken, not else. So now you know where we were that awful night. For we'd crossed the first channel about two mile, and it were growing darker and darker above and around us, all but one red line of light above the hills, when we came to a hollow (for all the Sands look so flat, there's many a hollow in them where you lose all sight of the shore). We were longer than we should ha' been in crossing the hollow, the sand was so quick; and when we came up again, there, again the blackness, was the white line of the rushing tide coming up the bay! It looked not a mile from us; and when the wind blows up the bay, it comes swifter than a galloping horse. 'Lord help us!' said I; and then I were sorry I'd spoken, to frighten Letty, but the words were crushed out of my heart by the terror. I felt her shiver up by my side, and clutch my coat. And as if the pig (as had screeched himself hoarse some time ago) had found out the danger we were all in, he took to squealing again, enough to bewilder any man. I cursed him between my teeth for his noise; and yet it was God's answer to my prayer, blind sinner as I was. Ay! you may smile, sir, but God can work through many a scornful thing, if need be.

"By this time the mare were all in a lather, and trembling and panting, as if in mortal fright; for though we were on the last bank afore the second channel, the water was gathering up her legs; and she so tired out! When we came close to the channel she stood still, and not all my *flogging* could get her to stir; she fairly groaned

aloud, and shook in a terrible quaking way. Till now Letty had not spoken; only held my coat tightly. I heard her say something, and bent down my head.

"'I think, John—I think—I shall never see baby again!'

"And then she sent up such a cry—so loud and shrill, and pitiful! It fairly maddened me. I pulled out my knife to spur on the old mare, that it might end one way or the other, for the water was stealing sullenly up to the very axle tree, let alone the white waves that knew no mercy in their steady advance. That one quarter of an hour, sir, seemed as long as all my life since. Thoughts, and fancies, and dreams, and memory, ran into each other. The mist, the heavy mist, that was like a ghastly curtain, shutting us in for death, seemed to bring with it the scents of the flowers that grew around our own threshold;—it might be, for it was falling on them like blessed dew, though to us it was a shroud. Letty told me at after, she heard her baby crying for her, above the gurgling of the rising waters, as plain as ever she heard anything; but the sea-birds were skirling, and the pig shrieking; I never caught it; it was miles away, at any rate.

"Just as I'd gotten my knife out, another sound was close upon us, blending with the gurgle of the near waters, and the roar of the distant; (not so distant though;) we could hardly see, but we thought we saw something black against the deep lead colour of wave, and mist, and sky. It neared, and neared: with slow, steady motion, it came across the channel right to where we were.

O God! it was Gilbert Dawson on his strong bay horse.

"Few words did we speak, and little time had we to say them in. I had no knowledge at that moment of past or future—only of one present thought—how to save Letty, and, if I could, myself. I only remembered afterwards that Gilbert said he had been guided by an animal's shriek of terror; I only heard when all was over, that he had been uneasy about our return, because of the depth of fresh, and had borrowed a pillion, and saddled his horse early in the evening, and ridden down to Cart-lane to watch for us. If all had gone well, we should ne'er have heard of it. As it was, old Jonas told it, the tears down-dropping from his withered cheeks.

"We fastened his horse to the shandry. We lifted Letty to the pillion. The waters rose every instant with sullen sound. They were all but in the shandry. Letty clung to the pillion handles, but drooped her head as if she had yet no hope of life. Swifter than thought, (and yet he might have had time for thought and for temptation, sir:—if he had ridden off with Letty, he would have been saved not me,) Gilbert was in the shandry by my side.

"'Quick!' said he, clear and firm. 'You must ride before her, and keep her up. The horse can swim. By God's mercy I will follow. I can cut the traces, and if the mare is not hampered with the shandry, she'll carry me safely through. At any rate, you are a husband and a father. No one cares for me.'

"Do not hate me, gentlemen. I often wish that night was a dream. It has haunted my sleep ever since like a dream, and yet it was no dream. I took his place on the saddle, and put Letty's arms around me, and felt her head rest on my shoulder. I trust in God. I spoke

some word of thanks; but I can't remember. I only recollect Letty raising her head, and calling out,—

"'God bless you, Gilbert Dawson, for saving my baby from being an orphan this night.' And then she fell against me, as if unconscious.

"I bore her through; or, rather, the strong horse swam bravely through the gathering waves. We were dripping wet when we reached the banks in-shore; but we could have but one thought—where was Gilbert? Thick mists and heaving waters compassed us round. Where was he? We shouted. Letty, faint as she was, raised her voice and shouted, clear and shrill. No answer came, the sea boomed on with ceaseless sullen beat. I rode to the guide's house. He was a-bed, and would not get up, though I offered him more than I was worth. Perhaps he knew it, the cursed old villain! At any rate I'd have paid it if I'd toiled my life long. He said I might take his horn and welcome. I did, and blew such a blast through the still, black night, the echoes came back upon the heavy air: but no human voice or sound was heard; that wild blast could not awaken the dead.

"I took Letty home to her baby, over whom she wept the live-long night. I rode back to the shore about Cart-lane; and to and fro, with weary march, did I pace along the brink of the waters, now and then shouting out into the silence a vain cry for Gilbert. The waters went back and left no trace. Two days [illegible]arwards he was washed ashore near Flukeborough. [illegible] and poor old mare were found half-buried [illegible]d by Arnside Knot. As far as we could [illegible]tropped his knife while trying to cut the

traces, and so had lost all chance of life. Any rate, the knife was found in a cleft of the shaft.

"His friends came over from Garstang to his funeral. I wanted to go chief mourner, but it was not my right, and I might not; though I've never done mourning him to this day. When his sister packed up his things, I begged hard for something that had been his. She would give me none of his clothes (she was a right-down having woman), as she had boys of her own, who might grow up into them. But she threw me his Bible, as she said they'd gotten one already, and his were but a poor used-up thing. It was his, and so I cared for it. It were a black leather one, with pockets at the sides, old-fashioned-wise; and in one were a bunch of wild flowers, Letty said she could almost be sure were some she had once given him.

"There were many a text in the Gospel, marked broad with his carpenter's pencil, which more than bore him out in his refusal to fight. Of a surety, sir, there's call enough for bravery in the service of God, and to show love to man, without quarrelling and fighting.

"Thank you, gentlemen, for listening to me. Your words called up the thoughts of him, and my heart was full to speaking. But I must make up; I've to dig a grave for a little child, who is to be buried to-morrow morning, just when his playmates are trooping off to school."

"But tell us of Letty; is she yet alive?" asked Jeremy.

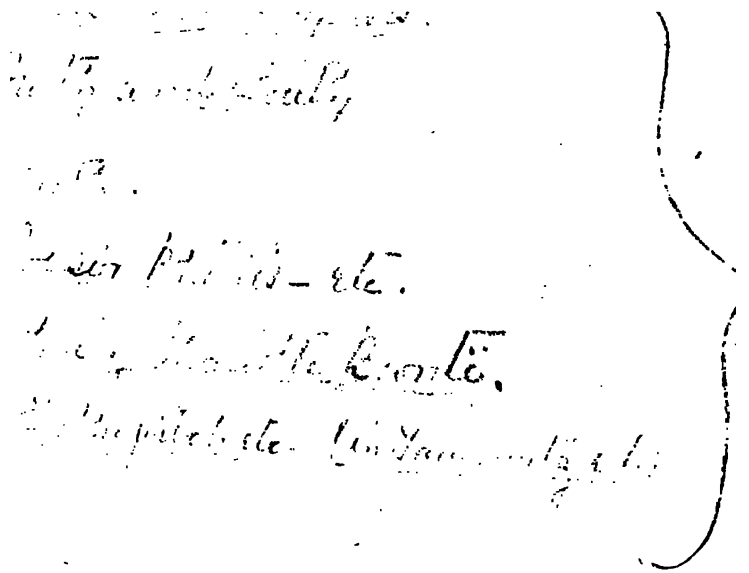
The old man shook his head, and struggled against a choking sigh. After a minute's pause he said,—

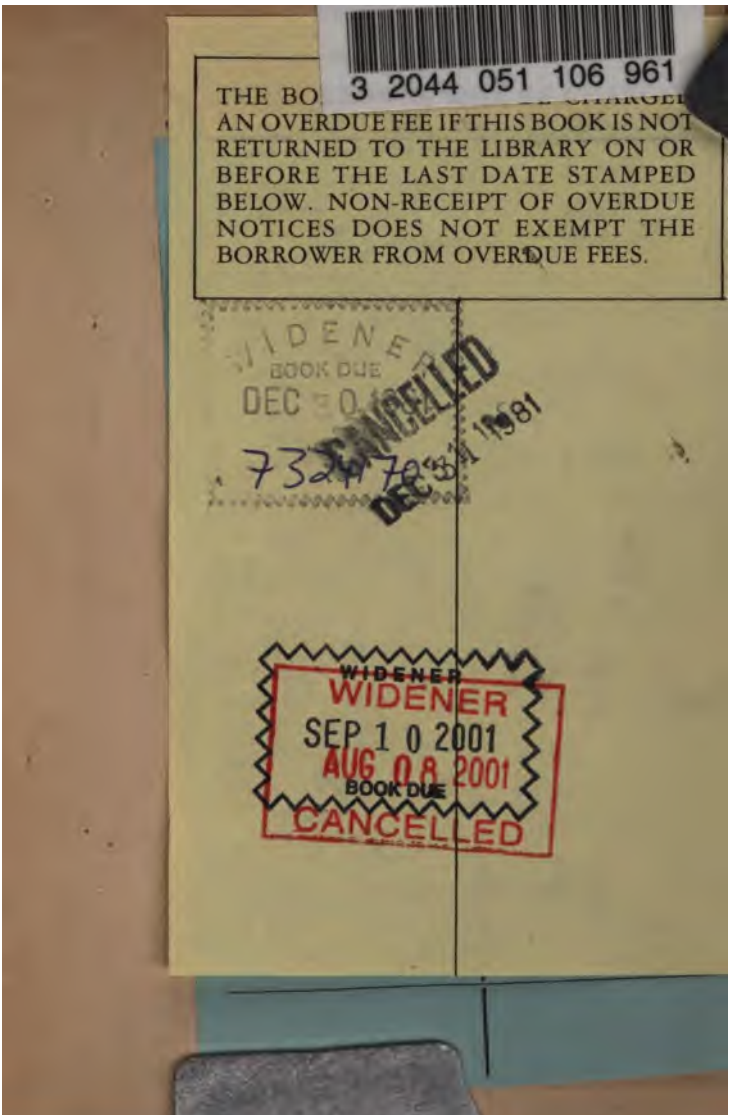
"She died in less than two year after that night

She was never like the same again. She would sit thinking, on Gilbert, I guessed; but I could not blame her. We had a boy, and we named it Gilbert Dawson Knipe; he that's stoker on the London railway. Our girl was carried off in teething, and Letty just quietly drooped, and died in less than a six week. They were buried here; so I came to be near them, and away from Lindal, a place I could never abide after Letty was gone."

He turned to his work, and we, having rested sufficiently, rose up, and came away.

Printed by SMITH, ELDER and Co., 15½ Old Bailey, E.C.





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